ENTERTAINMENT / D1
Lea plays lead role in Asian tour of musical

BUSINESS / B1
$1-B Nonoc mines rehabilitation deal collapses

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Senate, House ratify bicameral report on P1.126-trillion budget

ACROSS / A15
Gov't, MILF agree to end hostilities in North Cotabato town

Women in power less afraid to show soft side

WASHINGTON—SOME women were struck by the politics of maternity practiced by US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton to recent weeks, the imagery and stagecraft that highlighted their visits as

to Central, A3

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Tuesday, January 30, 2007 ★★ Vol. 22 / No. 53 website: www.inquirer.com

GMA calls for 4-party summit on May polls

By Christine O. Avendaño and Jerome Aning

STILL HOUNDED BY THE GHOST OF THE "HELLO Garci" scandal of 2004, President Macapagal-Arroyo wants to wipe the slate clean for the synchronized national and local elections on May 14.

Ms Arroyo yesterday said her administration would ensure clean, honest and orderly polls.

GMA CALLS, A4

Melo panel tags Palparan in slays

Another militant gunned down in Catbalogan

PALPARAN testifies before the Melo Commission in this photo taken last year. INQUIRER PHOTO

By Fe Zamora and Joey A. Gabieta, Inquirer Visayas

RETIRED SUPREME COURT JUSTICE JOSE MELO yesterday said his commission, citing command responsibility, had recommended that retired Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan and other commanders be held responsible for the extrajudicial killings in their respective areas during their tours of duty.

In the latest killing, one of two men on a motorcycle yesterday shot and killed Domumador de Lara, 58, a member of the militant Bayan Muna, as the latter handed sacks of rice being unloaded from a truck of the National Food Authority in Catbalogan, Samar, police said.

De Lara, an NFA driver, was the 27th militant killed in political violence during President Macapagal-Arroyo's administration, according to an Inquirer count. Leftist groups have a higher toll, saying politically motivated killings since 2001 have claimed over 700 lives, including victims of armed clashes.

Melo said holding military commanders responsible for extrajudicial killings was one of the recommendations in the final report of the fact-finding commission formed in August 2006 by Ms Arroyo to look into the political violence following a local and international outcry.

The 89-page report of the commission headed by Melo was submitted to Ms Arroyo last week. Melo declined to release the report, saying the President had the prerogative to make it public.

The 74-year-old Melo said the investigation of the four-member panel showed that "majority of the victims were leftist activists (allegedly)" and that the suspected assailants belonged to the military.

"But we don't want to tag the whole military establishment, only elements of the military who were allowed to do their thing without supervision from higher officers," Melo said in a telephone interview.

"Some of the killings were attributed to politicians, some to the security guards of landlords, but (the) majority of the killings pointed to these military elements (as the culprits)," he said.

MELO PANEL, A4

ACCOMPANIED by jail guards, Charlie "Atong" Ang leaves the Sandiganbayan after the antigraft court raised questions on his plea bargain. Ang, an erstwhile gambling crony of Joseph Estrada, offered to plead guilty to a lesser offense that he had conspired with the former President to divert P130 million in tobacco excise taxes. GLADY GARCIA

'Killings not part of our operations'

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

CAMP OLIVAS, PAMPANGA—Retired Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan Jr. yesterday said he could not be held responsible for the extrajudicial killings during his tour of duty in Central Luzon because "none of those was perpetrated by soldiers under my command."

Palparan, who headed the Army's 7th Infantry Division from September 2005 until his retirement on Sept. 13 last year, was reacting to the Melo Commission's recommendation that military commanders be held accountable for the killings.

He said that as far as he knew, the cases lodged against him or the commanders under him did "not pinpoint any specific soldier."

"Perhaps the Melo Commission should define what command re-

KILLINGS, A5

WRONG CRIME?

Atong's guilty plea questioned

By Norman Bordadora

TROUBLE 'STONG' ANGS HIS quest for a short jail term in exchange for his confession of his role in the alleged diversion of P130 million in tobacco excise taxes to President Joseph Estrada in 1998 encountered rough sailing in yesterday's pre-trial proceedings.

Justices of the Sandiganbayan special division questioned the crime Ang pleaded guilty to—corruption of a public official, which is punishable by two to six years in prison—because the case information never had Ang offering, much less, giving Estrada the bribe.

"There is nothing in your evidence that (Ang) bribed Estrada. He merely provided the wherewithal for which the tobacco excise taxes were diverted," Associate Justice Francisco Villaruz said as Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio and Ang's defense lawyer Alfredo Villasitor argued the merits of the plea bargain agreement.

ATONG'S, A7

Loren, Chiz spurn Palace offer of slots in Team Unity

By Michael Lim Ubac, Nancy Carvajal and Cynthia D. Balana

DESPITE ALL THE TALK OF switching loyalties, two of the opposition's big guns yesterday spurned Malacañang-backed attempts to lure them into joining the administration's "Team Unity" senatorial slate.

"I am gratified by the offers of the various political parties, but in case I decided to run, I would be politically independent but with the opposition," former Sen. Loren Legarda told the Inquirer. "I wouldn't be dictated (to) by anyone."

"Chiz is surely running (with the) opposition," Rizal Rep. Michael Duavit said of party mate Sorsogon Rep. Francis Escudero.

Duavit is secretary general of the Nacionalist People's Coalition, a party split into two camps, one of which supports President Macapagal-Arroyo and the other which is aligned with other opposition groups.

Both Legarda, who has consistently topped surveys of possible senatorial candidates, and Escudero have been the targets of Malacañang's catch-all effort to set up a senatorial lineup for the May 14 midterm elections that would include some of the chief critics of the President.

A member of Escudero's staff also confirmed to the Inquirer that the lawmaker was staying with the opposition.

Malacañang sources also appeared to squelch speculation that the Team Unity ticket would include Escudero.

One Palace official, who had

LOREN, A6

Filipino maid in HK theft posts bail

By Philip C. Tubeza and Daisy C.L. Mandap

HONG KONG—"SA WAKAS, MAKAKITA rin ng liwanag. Di ba, I was able to see some light."

This was what Evelyn Jaga-Catanduan yesterday said as she walked out of the Hong Kong High Court detention center nearly two months after she was sentenced to six months in prison for stealing photographs from Eamonn Holmes, Sony Corp's pop singer Jacky Cheung.

The 36-year-old domestic helper was released after High Court Deputy Judge Peter Langley allowed her to post a HK$50,000

FILIPINOS, A6

LIBERALS ALL

Joining hands at the Liberal Party's celebration of its 61st anniversary are (from left) Rep. Rodolfo Bacani Jr., former Education Secretary Florencio Abad, Sen. Francis Pangilinan, Sen. Franklin Drilon, Rep. Benigno Aquino III, Sen. Manuel Roxas II and Sen. Rodolfo Biazon. The event was held at the Club Filipino in Greenhills, San Juan. JOAN BONDOC

Encounters with Kerry, Gates in Davos

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

DAVOS, SWITZERLAND—CALL THEM "Davos moments."

These are the personal life-changing events that can only happen during the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF), usually held at the start of the year in this Alpine resort town high in the Swiss Alps.

For President Macapagal-Arroyo, one moment came during the Jan. 26 dinner where she came face to face with author Michael Porter.

Porter wrote "The Competitiveness of Nations" and he was among the big

ENCOUNTERS, A6

Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

Senate, House ratify bicam report on P1.126-T budget

By TJ Burgonio and Michael Ubac

THE HEADACHE THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES yesterday ratified the bicameral conference committee report on the P1.126-trillion 2007 national budget after a nearly month-long deadlock on a contentious school-feeding program.

The measure sailed unanimously by acclamation, in opposition to (report) as the start of their annual week of recession, a little more than a week before September adjournment on Feb. 9 for the May 14 election campaign period.

If President Macapagal-Arroyo signs the budget measure into law, this would break the government's practice of executing the previous year's budget the past two years.

The government has been operating on a P907.36-billion budget since 2005 after the two chambers of Congress failed to pass a budget in 2006.

Sen. Franklin Drilon, finance committee chair, said the budget would definitely cut the potential shortages in classrooms and teachers in the public schools.

It also provided a P10-billion fund for the reconstruction of areas devastated by the series of typhoons last year, and an additional P2 billion for the repair of schools in the flood regime damaged by the storms.

"We also oversaw this budget will not only facilitate government operations this year, but more importantly we are proud that we had labored with this important piece of legislative work that would hopefully make a difference in the lives of 85 million Filipinos," Drilon said in a speech.

The measure also granted Malacañang the authority to use appropriated funds to give long-overdue salary increases to government employees.

Sen. Juker Arroyo noted that P8.3 billion of the P10.3 billion in unappropriated funds be released to cover the 18 percent increase in the pay of government employees, including uniformed personnel and teachers.

"The moment the amount is set aside, the salary increase can take effect in July," he said in a briefing.

Arroyo said he doubted the President would veto the measure, saying "I don't think it's in the interest of the President to veto it."

Drilon and his House counterpart, Rep. Joey Salceda, broke the deadlock on the P4.7 billion fund for School Program of the Department of Education two weeks ago by agreeing to halve the allocation to the department's school-feeding and school-building programs.

Under the agreement, P2.6 (1 billion) would be allotted to fund the construction of 5,400 classrooms on top of 12,228 new classrooms, while P2 billion would be allocated to finance the distribution of food supplements such as milk, pan-de-sal and vegetable-based noodles.

"This will address the malnutrition problem among our schoolchildren, which is the original intent of the DepEd's nutrition program," Drilon said.

An additional P873 million was allotted for the hiring of more teachers who specialize in Math, Physics, Chemistry, Biology and General Science.

Poll body to abide by automation law but...

By Jocelyn Arong and Michael Lim Ubac

THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS (Comelec) yesterday said it would abide by the newly passed election automation law but warned it may not be able to implement it no later than May 14 polls.

In a press conference, Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos Jr. and Commissioners Resurreccion Borra, Romeo Brawner and Nicodemo Ferrer refused to categorically state if implementation of the newly signed Automated Election Law (Republic Act No. 9369, was still possible.

Borra, the Comelec official in charge of modernization, noted that RA 9369 would take effect on Feb. 12, with the bidding process for the automated machines also mandated by the new procurement law, or RA 9184, requiring at least three months.

"We will follow the law because Sen. Richard Gordon is threatening to impeach us, but at this point in time he cannot file any impeachment case yet because the law is not yet effective," Borra said.

But top officials of the Comelec can't be impeached for failing to partially automate the May polls, a House member said yesterday.

"They can't be impeached because they can't be held to account for an impossible crime," said Makati Rep. Teodoro Locsin, chair of the House committee on suffrage and electoral reforms.

At a press conference, Locsin, principal author of RA 9369, agreed with Abalos, saying it would be "impossible to implement" due to time constraints.

He noted that the law it amended, its public Act No. 8436, which had called on the Comelec to use an automated election system starting May 21, 1998, had not been implemented either.

"It has never been implemented and nobody has impeached them ... and Dec. Aquilino 'Nene' Pimentel and I will defend the Comelec. Right now what the Comelec is doing by holding back is exactly what the opposition would've because (opposition) insinuates it's a conspiracy," Locsin said.

He blamed the Senate for the delay in the approval of the measure which was signed into law only on Jan. 23 by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Locsin said he favored the enactment of the new law because "it is enough (that) it's in the senate books," and that definitely full automation would happen in 2010. With che ketine O. Arcinfacho

Webbs to raise case to SC

VIZCONDE MASSACRE

By Tarra Quismundo, Leila B. Salaverria and Margaux C. Ortiz

THE LAWYER FOR HUBERT Webb yesterday said they would pursue the fight for an acquittal by elevating the case to the Supreme Court.

The Court of Appeals (CA) denied the reconsideration plea of Webb and five others, Antonio "Tukoy" Fernandez, Michael Gatchalian, Miguel Rodriguez, Antonio "Tony Boy" Lejano and Peter Estrada to overturn their convictions in the Vizconde massacre.

The Parañaque Regional Trial Court had meted three up to 40 years behind bars (reclusion perpetua) for the rape-slay of Carmelita Vizconde and the killing of her mother, Estrellita, and younger sister, Jennifer inside their Parañaque house on June 30, 1991.

"The next step is to go to the Supreme Court and file a petition for certiorari to have the case reviewed again," Webb's lawyer Alex Ian-nazo told reporters in a phone interview.

The new appeal would again ask for a review of all evidence presented for the convicts's defense, including video playing him in California and Tijuana, Mexico shortly after the massacre.

The Webb family's stay in the United States before, during and immediately after the Vizconde massacre has been central to the defense's bid for an acquittal.

Against each of the five other convicted of the killings would "stay in jail until the court has favorably resolved" the petition.

The lawyer, who has yet to receive an official copy of the appellate court's decision, said he have 15 days upon receipt of the ruling to elevate the appeal to the high tribunal.

Happy father

Meanwhile, each other comrades, Lejano and Estrada, who still suffers from the loss of his wife and two daughters, expressed happiness after the CA junked the motion for reconsideration filed by Webb and his co-accused.

"I am happy because I believe that in the end, justice will prevail," Hernandez told the Inquirer in a phone interview.

He said, however, that he would wait for the Office of the Solicitor General regarding the possible withdrawal of Supreme Court Justice Antonio Carpio from participating in the case deliberation at the high tribunal.

"We (Carpio) had "witnessed" for Webb during the duration of the trial," Vizconde said.

Carpio said he had spoken with Webb's father, Senior Sup. Freddie Webb, who was then in the United States and expressed that his wife, Elizabeth, and Hubert were watching.

The date, Carpio said, was June 29, 1991, one day before the Vizconde killings.

Disappointed mother

Webb's mother, Elizabeth, yesterday expressed her dismay over the appellate court's affirmation of her son's conviction for the Vizconde massacre in 1991.

"Of course, we are very disappointed," Elizabeth told the Inquirer by phone yesterday. "Right now, I'm not in the house ... my husband (Freddie) is left, he's dealing with his pain and I am dealing with mine. We're both very weak right now. It's better for us not to break down at the same time so we're giving each other space ... (We) have to gather strength. We can't go there (jail) and be a liability for (Hubert)."

Then usually spend brothers at the national Bilibid Penitentiary's maximum security compound with their son, bringing him lunch and materials.

She said they would explore "all possible venues" to exonerate Webb from the gruesome crime. They learned that their appeal had been denied from a newspaper which heard from the court.

"It's very hard for me [to accept the CA decision] because we had denied that he was in the United States [at the time of the massacre]. It seems they were not able to dissect the case well," Elizabeth said.

She added that Jessica Alfaro, the controversial witness who implicated Webb and the five other convicts in the multiple slay, was "a fabricated witness."

Denied

Aside from denying the reconsideration plea of Webb and five others, the CA annulled their contention that public clamor influenced its decision to uphold the guilty verdicts.

In its 16-page resolution, the CA said its decision was supported by sufficient justifications based on the credibility of witnesses, appreciation of evidence (circumstances, detail and alibi), which it added, are well-entrenched in the court's jurisdiction.

"In conclusion, this Court stresses that the case assailed decision of Dec. 15, 2006 was arrived at after a careful consideration of the defenses of the accused-appellants and a painstaking examination of the records of the case," it said. "It is thus quite reprehensible for parties to even insinuate that the outcome of the instant appeal was swayed by public opinion or considerations other than merit."

The CA maintained its decision agreeing with the regional trial court that Webb, Lejano, Gatchalian, Fernandez, Rodriguez and Estrada were guilty as principals, and Eduardo Ilaning guilty as accessory, all rape with homicide.

The principal suspects' exclusive perjurious sentence was also upheld, while Ilaning's sentence was modified to six to 12 years imprisonment.

HUBERT Webb chats with a relative in this photo taken at the Parañaque City jail on Jan. 5, 1995. JOAN LAGMAY

5 Nobel Peace laureates join campaign vs leprosy

By Christine V. Bagnayon

FIVE NOBEL PEACE LAUREATES, leprosy sufferers and world health officials yesterday launched a second global appeal in Manila to end discrimination of those afflicted with the disease.

The Global Appeal to End Stigma and Discrimination against People Affected by Leprosy" has asked the United Nations Commission on Human Rights to pass a resolution calling on each national government to issue guidelines to eliminate discrimination against leprosy sufferers.

"We call on people all over the world to change their perception and foster an environment in which leprosy incidents, rural parents and their families can lead normal lives free from stigma and discrimination," said the manifestation, whose signatories include Cape Town Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu who received the Nobel Prize in 1984.

Tutu, who chaired the 1995 Truth and Reconciliation Commission that investigated human rights violations related to racial discrimination in Africa, was joined in the appeal by fellow peace laureates Oscar Arias, former Costa Rica president; Jimmy Carter, former United States president; Elie Wiesel; and the Dalai Lama.

The manifestation was also signed by Presidents Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil, Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, ex-Presidents Vaclav Havel of the Czech Republic, Mary Robinson of Ireland and S. Venkatraman of India, Ambassador Prince H. Hassan bin Talal, and Nobel Laureates of the Filipino Foundation.

The world leaders were trying to dismantle myths about leprosy—that it was highly contagious, hereditary, curse or result of "divine punishment."

The World Health Organization has said about 130 million people with leprosy worldwide, as well as their families, continue to face ostracism and social stigmatization.

"We want the whole world to know that leprosy is a curable disease, that medication is free all over the world. Therefore, there should be no discrimination," Nobel Sinaloana, WHO goodwill ambassador for elimination of leprosy, said in launching the "Global Appeal 2007."

"Contrary to popular belief, leprosy is not easily difficult to contract," Sinaloana said. "With prompt diagnosis and treatment, it can be medically cured within 6 to 12 months without risk of deformity."

Leprosy ceased to be a public health problem after a cure was made available in the 1980s. Since 1985, multidrug therapy has detected more than 15 million leprosy sufferers, and prevented disability in four million people, WHO said.

With a report from AP

SWS head slams Comelec ban on publication of survey results

By Kate Pedroso
Inquirer Research

"SILENCE OF SHEEP IN PERPETUITY."

This was how Social Weather Stations president Mahar Mangahas described the Commission on Elections' issuance of Resolution No. 7767, which contains provisions banning the publication of surveys "adversely" affected and local candidates within a specified period before election day.

The resolution, which contains the rules and regulations for the conduct of the May 2007 elections, was promulgated by the Comelec en banc on Nov. 28, 2006. Section 11 reads: "Surveys affecting national candidates shall not be published seven (7) days before the day of the election."

Mangahas pointed out the same provision could be found in Republic Act No. 9006, the Fair Election Act, which was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court on May 3, 2001.

In 2000, dozens of survey sectors to election surveys, including election 3.4, which considers the provision in question.

In May 2001, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of SWS and the Manila Standard newspaper, saying "[Section] 5.4 of RA 9006 constitutes an unconstitutional abridgement of freedom of speech, expression and the press."

SWS and Manila Standard had argued that "the restriction on the publication of election survey results constitutes prior restraint on the exercise of freedom of speech."

For his part, the Comelec justified the restriction as "necessary to prevent the manipulation and corruption of the electoral process by unscrupulous and erroneous surveys just before the election."

But SWS countered that when pollsters conducted and published the results of surveys "up to as close as two days before election day" during the 1992, 1995 and 1998 polls, it did not cause "confusion among the voters."

It also maintained that "there is neither empirical nor historical evidence to support the conclusion that there is an immediate and inevitable danger to the voting process by election surveys," and that "there is no reason for ordinary voters to be denied access to the results of election surveys, which are relatively objective."

The Comelec countered "the legitimate freedom of expression in mind, and the restriction being limited both in duration, i.e., the last 15 days before the national election and the last 7 days before a local election, and in scope as it does not prohibit election survey results but only requires timeliness."

The Supreme Court ruled that "[Section] 5.4 is invalid because (1) it imposes a prior restraint on the freedom of expression, (2) it is a direct and total suppression of a category of expression even though such suppression is only for a limited period, and (3) the government has not shown any substantial right to be achieved by means other than the suppression of freedom of expression."

According to Mangahas, Comelec spokesperson Jeirne Jimenez had acknowledged the unconstitutionality of the provision in an interview on the ABC television news channel last week. Mangahas said Jimenez claimed: "It was not intentional" and that it would be "corrected soon."

"As of now, I have not seen any correction from Comelec, even though Mr. Jimenez claimed to me, by telephone on January 25, that the correction was 'awaiting Comelec signature,'" Mangahas said in a statement.

A check of the Comelec Education and Information Division Orang (www.comelec.gov.ph) website showed no copy of the resolution had not yet been modified and still carried the provision.

HONG KONG PROTEST
Party-list Rep. Liza Maza of Gabriela addresses a rally attended by thousands of Filipino domestic helpers in Hong Kong Sunday to protest the implementation of the new POEA guidelines. Dolores Balbastro, chairperson of the United Filipinos in Hong Kong, said the rally was just the first of a series of protests that they are planning to force the Philippine government to scrap the new guidelines.
(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

TODAY SINGAPORE, TOMORROW THE WORLD

Gov't allots P877 per voter to let OFWs vote via internet

By Veh Contreras

THE GOVERNMENT IS ALLOTTING P877 per voter under a pilot project that would enable migrant Filipinos in at least one country to cast their ballots over the Internet, a Commission on Elections official said yesterday.

"That's cheap for modern technology," said Commissioner Florentino Tuason Jr., who said the body now has no "40 percent" chance of implementing this scheme for voting in Singapore.

The offshore city state is home to some 26,000 registered Filipino voters, he said. At P877 per voter, the Comelec is therefore allocating P22.5 million in par. three ahead of the rest of the Filipino electorate in terms of help-limb polling.

Only the overseas Internal election held within the country would use the Datelec around P30/per voter, he said.

In the first ever overseas absentee voting held in May 2004, the cost went up to P1,400 per overseas voter to cover newly bought equipment, personnel training, information campaigns, etc., Tuason added.

The official gave these figures to the media at yesterday's agreement signing between the Comelec and the Department of Foreign Affairs on the conduct of overseas polling for over half of a million migrants.

Under Undersecretary Rafael Seguis said that from around 364,000 registered overseas voters in 2004, the figure has since grown by a third, about 504,800 voters are registered to troop to 87 polling posts in over 50 countries for the May 2007 elections.

Tuason said Comelec chose Singapore in pilot "i-voting" because 60 to 70 percent of its population would have access to cyberspace, among the highest internet usage rates in the world.

He said the Comelec was set to test the scheme pending a check on whether there would be "legal obstacles" to its implementation in view of the poll modernization law—or the Automated Election System Act—signed by President Macapagal-Arroyo last Jun. 23.

Through "i-voting," a voter will be assigned a kind of personal identification number (PIN) on one his vote by accessing the Comelec web site "from his home or from any Internet kiosk," Tuason explained.

The procedure would still apply to a Filipino voter registered in Singapore but who might be in the Philippines during the 30-day balloting period he overseas voters, Seguis added.

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CEBU – KUALA LUMPUR	59

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TRAVEL FAIR 31 JAN-6 FEB 07

5 new witnesses vs rebel soldiers

By Alcuin Papa

AT LEAST FIVE NEW PETNGERS BOlonging to the military have submitted statements to public Solicitor the rebellion case against some 30 civilians and soldiers linked to the botched attempt to overthrow the Arroyo administration in February last year.

A senior police officer, who spoke on condition of anonymity for lack of authority, told the Inquirer the testimonies of the new witnesses would strengthen the case against the accused rebellious group.

"We believe their testimonies would corroborate our evidence against those accused," the officer said.

The source said the witnesses, who were mostly from the Marine Corps, did not directly participate in the February coup attempt but had "vital information" that would strengthen the case.

The officer also said a "big name" personality was set to be identified by the witnesses. The personality was said to have been part of the group that financed the coup try.

Palace have filed rebellion charges against soldiers belonging to the Magdalo group whose members were returned to a central house in Fairview, Quezon City last year.

Some of those arrested allegedly implicated former Sen. Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan, lawyer Christopher Belmonte and former Ambassador Roy Señeres in the plot to oust Mr. Arroyo. Only Honasan is in police custody.

A few days after the failed coup, an uprising occurred at Philippine Marine headquarters at Fort Bonifacio but this was a result of the relief of Marine commandant Maj. Gen. Renato Miranda. Many people, however, thought it was an attempt to continue the coup try.

Some military officers are under going a general court-martial for their alleged participation in the failed February coup attempt. They include Miranda, former Scout Rangers chief Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim and Marine Col. Ariel Querubin.

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Lyn Ching – Fineval, 34
Smart and savvy mom

Always on the go, Lyn makes sure that she never runs out of quality time for her daughter and husband. Lyn wants to do things fast under a pretty much organized schedule. In fact, her fast-paced lifestyle is the same reason that brought her closer to Marie France's Ultrashape. She says, "With Ultrashape, all I have to do is walk in, lie down for about an hour while undergoing my treatment and drive my way back to work again. I can even take phone calls or read some magazines even while I'm at it. The best part was, I could feel my tummy flatten only after a few weeks! A friend of mine who also tried Ultrashape immediately lost 2 inches in just one month! Ultrashape is not just fast and easy, it delivers excellent results as well!"

Cristina Gonzalez – Bermudez, 42
Posh and classic mom

Despite the busy nature of her catering business, Cristina prefers spending most of her quality time in Tacloban where time moves slowly. It is where she best personifies *calm* and *domesticity* while still donning a classy, graceful image.

She states, "I love my life in the province. Strolling along the beach, wearing simple dresses and enjoying the serenity of the place with my family. It strips me off the frills and stresses from work and city life. It's comfortable in good food because of the relaxing environment, all I have to do is to have my tummy flattened by Ultrashape. Just like my preference for comfort, Ultrashape requires no drastic surgeries and harmful side-effects. It doesn't require complicated diets and it leaves no ugly scars. It's a very convenient, simple and risk-free method to re-sculpt the body by melting away loose tummy fat that makes me look and feel older and less attractive."

Dawn Zulueta-Lagdameo, 37
Glam and modern mom

Dawn is no doubt devoted and hands-on with her son Jacobo. But during her spare time, she indulges on her penchant for stylish shoes, fashionable clothes, costume parties and her ipod music collection. Her chic and cosmopolitan taste with just about everything makes her an exciting, contemporary mom. For Dawn, it's always an advantage to be up-to-date.

"Even with my slimming options, I go for the one that's modern and gives so many benefits at the same time – like Ultrashape! With its ultrasound technology, Ultrashape breaks down stubborn fats that are left inside my body even after I've lost weight. What's good is, it metabolizes all the unwanted body fat so it can be converted to useful energy! For me, that's what makes liposuction unnecessary. Ultrashape is safer, equally hi-tech yet just as effective. Its non-invasive approach to body contouring makes it a better alternative to liposuction!," Dawn explains.

This year give yourself a dramatic sexier body. Forget about liposuction, excruciating diets and tiring workouts! If you are still left troubled with some stubborn fats that just won't go away even after going through your crash diets, rigid workouts or even a surgical procedure, schedule yourself for an Ultrashape treatment right away! It promises an average reduction of about 2cm in just one treatment – without the risks and side-effects, surgical scars and downtime! Call Marie France now at 894-BODY (2639).

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, Kilusan Tungo sa Pambansang Tangkilikan

SO THE FILIPINO PEOPLE MAY KNOW:

A QUESTION OF FAIRNESS AND DECENCY

THE FACTS: The Arroyo government is pushing the indirect but controversial sale of a big block of PLDT shares to a group of foreign investors composed of the Hong Kong-based First Pacific Co. Ltd. and NTT DoCoMo of Japan. The block of PLDT shares has a current market value of almost P30 billion, but the government, through the Committee on Privatization (COP), is selling it at 20 percent discount, or P25.6 billion. The government says the sale seeks to raise funds to reduce the budget deficit. To be concluded by the end of January, the sale raises several issues:

FOREIGN OWNERSHIP

The sale is a blatant and wanton violation of the 1987 Constitution that limits foreign ownership to 40 percent of the equity of a telecommunications entity. PLDT has admitted that foreign firms already own 61.2 percent of its common shareholdings. Since, the block of PLDT comprise 6.3 percent of PLDT equity, the foreign ownership will rise to 67.5 percent. This is compounded by the foreign investors' heavy borrowings from local banks, depriving legitimate Filipino entrepreneurs of capital to shore up their businesses.

RIGHTFUL VALUATION

The P25.6 billion price tag is a bargain for the foreign investors, one of which has a dubious reputation and track record of handling "tainted" Indonesian money. It is a sweetheart deal or a fire sale.

How the national government has reached this low price is a big question. PLDT is now the nation's most profitable firm with an estimated net profit of about P35 billion in 2006. Also, PLDT share prices have been rising - and will continue to rise over the years. Instead of selling the PLDT shares at a premium of between 20 to 50 percent over its current market price (which is normal for block sales), the government is pushing the sale at a discount, where it stands to lose between P8 to P17 billion in revenues.

TRANSPARENCY

Undue haste and lack of transparency have characterized the asset disposal. It took two weeks to complete the public bidding, which few people knew and where legitimate business outfits, especially those Filipinos-owned, had almost no chance to participate. No credible and independent financial advisor was hired. The bidding took place when typhoon "Reming" was killing hundreds of Bicolanos and public debates were raging over the issue of amending the Constitution through a constituent assembly. The privatization of big ticket assets usually takes several months to complete with stringent bidding rules to follow. The transaction is more of a negotiated sale under the guise of a public bidding.

MISREPRESENTATION

The national government and the PLDT propaganda machinery have been saying that what is being sold is a big block of Philippine Telecommunications Investment Corporation (PTIC) shares and not PLDT's. As such, the price is low because PTIC is not a listed firm, unlike PLDT. This is a lie. PTIC is the holding firm that possesses the controlling interest in PLDT. What are being sold are PLDT shares, not PTIC shares, which are worthless without the PLDT shares.

MOTIVES

The hasty sale of a big block of government asset at a very cheap price to foreign investors raises many questions about the motives of its movers. To augment the budget deficit is unbelievable. Is this a way for the Arroyo administration to raise campaign funds for its candidates in the coming midterm polls? Has graft money changed hands? Who are the powerful people behind this deal?

THE KILUSANG MAKABANSANG EKONOMIYA (KME) opposes the impending sale, which will be a clear violation of the Constitution and the basic tenets of fairness, decency and transparency.

We urge the people, who are involved in and endorsing this sale, to back out because they will certainly face the people's wrath for their irresponsible and treasonous acts.

We urge the President to cancel the sale and initiate a re-bidding with more transparent rules. If this is not possible, we urge the President to keep these PLDT shares in the name of the national government primarily to boost its presence in a critical sector, which is telecommunications.

We urge Congress to proceed with its probe "in aid of legislation" of the circumstances surrounding the anomalous deal and come out with a clear and unequivocal legislation that would prevent sweetheart deals or fire sale of government assets.

We urge certain members of Congress to refrain from supporting and pushing what is patently illegal and anomalous sale and to adhere without fear or favor to the time-honored principles of public service.

We urge other responsible sectors of Philippine society to join hands with us in our quest of economic nationalism, where the interest of Filipino entrepreneurs is given focus and importance. It is about time to unite.

SIGNED:

Most Rev. Julio Labayen, DD
Emeritus of Infanta

Most Rev. Deogracias Iniguez, DD
Diocese of Libmanan

Most Rev. Antonio R. Tobias, DD
Diocese of Novaliches

Most Rev. Emmanuel Trance, OFM
Chairman, Franciscan Movement Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation (FMJPIC)

Dr. Estela Cenders, FSGC
Carmelian Daughters of Charity Servants of the Poor

Fr. Ernesto Gonzales
Director, UST Social Research Center

Jaime B. Higuerro
Chairman- Kilusang Makabansang Ekonomiyat(KME)

Atty. A. Albert
Chairman – Kilusang Tungo sa Pambansang Tangkilikan (KATAPAT)

Fr. Rudy Abao, MSC
Parish Priest, Sto Cristina Parish
Former Chair, AMRSP
Former Pres. Communication Foundation of Asia

Sr. Zenaida Pineda, RGS
Sisters in charge
Alay Kapwa

Sr. Agnes Lauron, SFIC
Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception

Sr. Wilfredo Lacsay, SFIC
Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, SFIC Manikaya

Sr. Dolor Salamisan, AMP
Augustinian Missionaries of the Philippines

Sr. Tess Cardona, RGS
Religious of the Good Shepherd
Social Action, Negor Occidental

Sr. Ma. Pilar Lagura, SCIJM
Sisters of Charity our Lady Mother of Mercy

Dean Jorge V. Sibal
UP School of Labor & Industrial Relation (SOLAIR)

Atty. Federico Pilo
Philippine Association of Supermarkets, Inc (PASI)

Norman O. Mederos
Filipino Inventors Society (FIS)

Edmundo Agcolla
National Economic Protectionism Assn. (NEPA)

Alfredo Benoian, Sr.
President, Asia Pacific Entrepreneurs Assn. Inc. (ASPEA) Small & Medium Scale

Atty. Ramon To
Makati Justice League

Sr. Fely Solatorio
Missionary Sisters of Mercy

Sr. Rosa Fajas
SSC, St. Francis of Assisi

Angelito R. Mendoza
Confederation of Labor Garments & Textile

Dr. Jessy Perez
Public Health Consultant

Kapatirang Herrada
President, Alyansa Lagumang Security Guard ng Pilipinas

Gloria Arroyo
Kulay-Pagasa

Victoria Segui Cuetio
Kahublagan sa Pagbago Pantal

AFP tells soldiers: DND post GMA's call

THE MUSIC FORCED of the Philippine told in addition to accept whomever President Macapagal-Arroyo would name as the next defense secretary following a controversial vote has propelled choice of Public Works secretary Hermogenes Ebdane Jr.

Mr. Arroyo is expected to make her announcement by the end of the month. She said she would swear in acting Ebdane chief for only two months starting Nov. 30, 2006.

"It is the prerogative of the President. The Armed Forces will accept and follow whomever the President appoints," military spokesperson Lt. Col. Bartolome Bacarro said yesterday.

He said so far in the AFP leadership are concerned, rumors about Ebdane's impending appointment have been contained without negative reaction from soldiers.

Ebdane was originally reported as the top choice for the defense post when Mr. Arroyo's Cabinet shakeup began resumed and Senator Sotto. Arroyo in Nov. 30 did he publicly disagreed with Makalintal's claim to overhead the Constitution, Bona Pilar-Bagaso

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Tuesday, January 30, 2007
4A Week in Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Heb 12:1-4
Gospel: Mark 6:1-6

Jesus returned to the other side of the lake and while he was still on the shore, a large crowd gathered around him. Jairus, one of the synagogue, came up and seeing Jesus, threw himself at his feet and asked him earnestly, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her so that she may get well and live."

Jesus went with him and many people followed, pressing him on every side. Among the crowd was a woman who had suffered from hemorrhage for twelve years. She had suffered much at the hands of many doctors and had spent everything she had, but instead of getting better, she was worse. Once she had heard about Jesus, she came in behind him and touched his cloak thinking, "If I just touch his clothing, I shall get well." Very soon her blood dried up at once, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her complaint.

But Jesus asked, "Who touched me?" When they all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds are all around you. How do you ask who touched you?" But he kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, aware of what had happened, came forward trembling and fell at his feet before him and told him the whole truth.

Then Jesus said to her, "Daughter, your faith has cured you, go in peace and be free of this illness."

While Jesus was still speaking, some people arrived from the official's house to inform him, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Master any further?" But Jesus ignored what they said and told the official, "Do not fear, just believe." And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James and John, the brother of James.

When they arrived at the house, Jesus saw a great commotion with people weeping and wailing loudly. Jesus entered and said to them, "Why all this commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but asleep."

They laughed at him. But Jesus put them outside and went with the child's father and mother and his companions to the room where the child lay. Taking her by the hand, he said to her, "Talitha koum!" which means: "Little girl, get up!"

The girl got up at once and began to walk as she was 12 years old. The parents were astonished, utterly astonished. Jesus sternly ordered them not to let anyone know about it, and told them to give her something to eat.

Commentary:

We are reminded by a friend of mine—remember them, sister Aileen, why an elder, Jesus combined the years and they followed him—we come after him, and we follow as we are, different to be disciples and to observe the struggle. We are very simple in learning to come call. Jesus built, centering first of our miracles today: 12 years caught help in faith, the touch, to see to touch his cloak, and it immediately healed by the power that goes forth from Jesus—were just his garments. The fully has story and of course to touch his cloak. Jesus brings the daughter of Jairus back to life. At age 12 adolescent, however accepted to the life accepted she died but ascended again through the power of the blood of Jesus. Jesus' words are just as true. "Fear is useless. What is needed is trust." We must trust in the blood of Calvary, long Hours, death, but, through the all our sorrow—trust is what we need.

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Encounters with Kerry, Gates in Davos

To continue on page A7

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THE AUTHOR enjoys the snow in Davos.

Seminars that attended the dinner hosted by the Lanzarotes based security specialist Regis Hutchings Inc. in his former's house.

A list of Robin's, Mr Arroyo said she asked for his autograph, which the author promptly granted.

Her Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, Ms Davos assumed was seeing live and in person the imposing 6'6" US Sen. John Kerry, who lost the race for president to George W. Bush.

Fortunately for this journalist, his Davos moments came more than once.

The first came on Jan. 25, the third of the five-day annual meeting, in the Hotel Belvedere—an up-close and personal encounter with Anthony E Fernandez, chief executive officer of budget airline firm Air Asia based in Malaysia.

The former Warner Music executive, who thinks highly of the concept of kids it and the Malaysian of the defunct Shalon's Cradle, is the apple of the eye of investment analysts because of his remarkable feat of nurturing Air Asia from a small Malaysian airline into one of the world's leading budget fare airlines.

And the encounter, also named a Global Young Leader by the WEF had just bought 150 more planes because he's just getting started.

Devoted casually in jeans and a t-shirt shirt with a bright red Air Asia hat, he gamely posed for a photograph for the books.

Two floating on air

Fernandez took part in the discussion on Asean's Economic Roadmap here where Ms Arroyo gave the opening remarks.

'Land of the future'

My next Davos moment came later that evening when I took my seat at the gallery of the main hall of the Congress Center to find Mexican President Felipe Calderon giving an impassioned talk on how he believed that his country was "the land of the future."

His session came just before the keynote speech—Bunye's "40 Years—A New Future" with Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung and Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in the evening.

Bunye ended up reading the rest of his speech when I came in.

I only got the gist of what he was saying because he spoke in Spanish and I had only 11 seconds of the Abbot to help me understand what he was saying.

Nevertheless, a few of his thoughts that I managed to grasp were enough to somehow me that my impression from articles on him was correct—he is a leader to reckon with.

Neighboring United States better prepare for what he is preparing to do, I thought.

Gates and Blair

My real surprise for the evening, however, was yet to happen.

I was sitting my rump first walking down the road on my way to a restaurant from the Congress Center, valiantly fighting off the freezing temperature, when I was hurried along by a walking twins policeman.

He said my thoroughly fun, fled-up body, with gloves and a cap with earmuffs on head, should walk faster because a VIP was coming up behind me.

When I looked over my shoulder, who did I see but Microsoft Corp.'s William "Bill" Gates III in animated discussion with charismatic British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

I hurried along as fast as I could and then stopped when I got in front of the majestic Hotel Belvedere where the pair were headed.

The encounter took all of about two minutes, but it was enough to give me bragging rights to the other many Filipinos out there that they actually saw the two leaders in person, and together at that?

And for a business journalist, seeing Bill Gates, the world's richest man and founder of the world's biggest software company, was like a Beatles fan seeing John Lennon come back to life.

Seeing Gates with Blair, who is sadly about to step aside as prime minister, was an unexpected bonus, like an extra scoop of ice cream on a scorching day.

It was that kind of moment that could only happen in Davos, where business, political and civil society leaders come together once a year on discussions pertaining to some of the global scale in a casual yet formal fashion.

They come despite the isolation, the frigid temperature and frosty snowfall that are held to people from the tropics, because they believe in the WEF's commitment to "improve the state of the world."

I slept that night after enjoying authentic cheese fondue and Swiss white wine with the happy thought that I saw Gates and Blair in the flesh.

But there was more.

Shaking hands with Kerry

The next day, while I was waiting in line for Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez on the flight home to Manila with the rest of the Filipino reporters, Democratic Sen. John Kerry emerged in the lobby.

Because I was seated near the door, he looked my way and stopped, probably because I had a tangled mess on my face.

Before I knew it, I blurted out that I would have voted for him had I been an American.

He came over, looked me straight in the eye and shook my outstretched hand. Then he told me that if I had been able to vote, he would have been president.

Of course, he was giving me a slick politician's line, but I didn't care.

I thought he certainly had the courage, the height and even the hair to become president. The penetrating blue eyes did not hurt his image either.

But alas, it was not meant to be.

No Bono encounter

But at least I can say I shook hands with a man who might have been US president, although I was mentally kicking myself because I was stunned enough to forget to take a picture of that priceless moment.

Then again, I had witnesses.

The only thing missing from my string of Davos moments was a close encounter of the U2's front man, but it was probably nothing to scoff.

After all, I had already had so many

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Filipino maid in HK theft posts bail

From page A1

heard while her appeal to overturn her conviction was pending.

"I do not know how to express how I feel right now. If only I could talk to each one of my fellow Filipino workers to thank them for their help," said Catacutan, whose bail was raised through a fund-raising drive among Filipino workers.

"I did not know I would be released today. I now want to clear my name. I want to leave Hong Kong without any criminal record," she added.

Catacutan was found guilty last June 13 on two charges of theft for stealing photographs and a letter from Cheung and his wife, retired actress Rhi Lo.

Magistrate Winston Leung sentenced Catacutan to a six-month prison term under bail, awaiting an appeal in the Filipino community in Hong Kong.

Clutching a Bible and some personal belongings, Catacutan walked out of jail at around 5:20 p.m. She will be staying in the Philippine Workers Resource Center, a shelter of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, while her appeal is pending.

Philippine Consul General of Hong Kong performed Catacutan's temporary release bond today.

"This is a very welcome development, I'm glad it happened," Mysore said. "Thanks to all those who helped make it happen."

He said he hoped Catacutan would be equally successful in her fight to get her conviction quashed.

Confrontation with wife

Catacutan's troubles began last July when the photographs of Cheung and his wife while dancing the night away.

The following month, Catacutan found a photograph of Mel Lo in the rubbish bin and decided to keep it with the other two in an open shelf in a room she shared with another maid in Cheung's house.

Catacutan began working for Cheung last April but did not have a good relationship with Mel Lo. Cheung's wife later learned about the prohibited photographs from the other maid and confronted Catacutan, who decided to quit, giving the couple the incentive to mount a case.

In her testimony in court, Catacutan said she explained to the actress last July that she was leaving because of her confrontation with Mel Lo over the photographs.

However, Cheung at the time decided to do nothing about it and stopped Catacutan from leaving. The singer was then in the process of moving from his house on Stubbs Road to Repulse Bay and wanted her to stay on.

Help from HK barristers

Catacutan agreed and the Cheungs went on a holiday in Japan. But on their return on Aug. 27 and upon the completion of their move to Repulse Bay, the singer reportedly dismissed the Filipino maid.

Asked in court why the pictures were with her, Catacutan said she was a big fan of Hong Kong's leading exponent of Cantopop, a hybrid of Chinese ballads and western songs.

Catacutan's temporary freedom was secured with the help of two Hong Kong female lawyers, solicitor Ivy Tong and barrister Ody Lai, who both worked pro bono.

The 41-year-old singer rose to fame in the mid-1980s to become one of the so-called "Heavenly Kings of Song," along with stars Leon Kwok, Andy Lau and Leon Lai.

In his decision last month, Magistrate Leung berated the maid for keeping the photographs.

Defense dismissed

He dismissed Catacutan's defense that Cheung had known as early as July that she had the photographs and that his reaction then ostensibly constituted her resigning from.

The judge said a celebrity's personal possessions could command a high price if sold in the market and suggested that Catacutan's actions amounted to a "betrayal."

Lai filed a review of the sentence before Magistrate Leung, but the judge dismissed it.

The domestic helper has also formally applied for legal aid. If granted, she says she may appeal against the court's rejection of her whose she High Court sudden her appeal.

Judge Gallagher granted Catacutan bail on condition that she surrender her passport and other travel documents in the court and report to the police three times a week, said Vice Consul Noel Novicio.

It was a very quick hearing; it lasted only 18 minutes. He already gave an indication at the start that he was going to grant her bail," said Novicio, who was allowed to attend the closed-door hearing.

Lai said she was confident that Catacutan's conviction would be reversed.

Corrections

IN THE JAN. 29 ISSUE, a story on Page A2 carried the erroneous headline "Militants: MNLF helping us against MILF." In the story, a high military official confirmed that the West National Liberation Front is helping the government forces bear down the Abu Sayyaf Group—not the MILF (More Islamic Liberation Front)—in Sulu.

* * *

IN THE SAME ISSUE, a story on Page A8—"SSS: The bulls of the bull"—misspelled the first name of the person to whom President Macapagal-Arroyo sent the Bond: he is Ramon Jacinto. The person in her house had the best attendance among all the BSP business dinners and luncheons in Davos. Mr Arroyo was referring to Haan—not Hand—Ardenah. He is a Swiss businessman and former WEF board member.

* * *

Readers may send their comments, suggestions or queries about the newspaper to the Ang Sulat, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 5/F Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Makati-Pasay Avenue, Makati City; fax this No. 897-7-417-0344; e-mail info@inquirer.com.ph.

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NYG with one of his lawyers Ruth Castelo

Atong's guilty plea questioned

A-newspage A1

The criminal information against Estrada and the testimony of Enrico Paz Sec. Luis "Chavit" Singson showed that Ang delivered the P130 million in excise tax originally meant for the tobacco-growing provinces to Estrada's residence on Polk Street in Greenhills, San Juan, Metro Manila in August 1998.

Accessory to plunder

"Who doesn't he just plead guilty to being an accessory to plunder?" Villarosa said.

The Sandiganbayan special division is trying Estrada, Jinggoy Estrada, lawyer Edgardo Espiritu and big for plunder.

Estrada is facing plunder charges for allegedly amassing some P4 billion in payoffs from illegal gambling operations, tobacco excise kickbacks and business commissions.

He is also charged with perjury for allegedly lying during his sworn.

In the plea bargaining agreement, Ang, Estrada's former gambling buddy, pleaded guilty to the crime of corruption of a public official in exchange for his admission that he had conspired with Estrada to divert the P130 million and that he received the P25 million for his services from the transaction.

The deal was signed by Ang, Villarosa, Miss Ignacio, Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuño and Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez.

If approved by the Sandiganbayan, the agreement would allow Ang to enter a plea of guilty for the lesser offense of bribery and avoid spending the sentence of 40 years for plunder.

As part of the deal, Ang would assist in the prosecution of cases "in which he has personal knowledge."

"He benefited from the bribe money, but he did not give or offer the bribe," Associate Justice Teresita Leonardo-De Castro said.

Nonexistent crime

The Revised Penal Code defines corruption of a public official as making offers or promises, or giving gifts or presents to public officials in exchange for the commission of a crime in connection with or her duty as a public servant.

"There is an allegation in the amended information [that] P130 million was given by Ang ... [for] in connection to a nonexistent crime," Villarosa said.

Being the accessory to plunder carries a penalty of eight years in prison compared with up to six years for bribery, according to Villarosa. "With the mitigating factor of a voluntary admission, it can go down further," he said.

Portalis also tackled the Estrada defense panel's criticism of the plea bargain deal as it contained derogatory information against Chief Executive.

"What would be the problem if it says malversation committed plunder, period?" Portalis asked.

Estrada lawyer Jose Flaminiano had asked by a clarification from the court if the deal would be used against the former President.

Supplying, in its earlier manifestation, said the defense panel should have been given notice of the contents of the deal.

Necessary to justify plea

[The dismissal of the alleged conspiracy] was needed to convince the court ... We thought it was necessary to justify the plea for a lesser offense," Villarosa said in court.

"If we put President Estrada in a bad light, we apologize. But it is something beyond our control," he said.

Villarosa maintained that the contents of the plea bargain could not be used as evidence against Estrada because it was an agreement between Ang and the government prosecutors.

Ang's defense lawyers—Villarosa and Ruth Castelo—argued in vain to convince the anti-graft court to give due course to the deal submitted to the Sandiganbayan on Jan. 24.

3 days for comment

Insisting that they would not get a favorable decision on the agreement as prescribed by previous jurisprudence, Villarosa asked the court for three days to allow him and Castelo to comment on the views on the deal expressed by the justices.

Asked what Ang's lawyers thought of the justices' view that Ang may have confessed to a crime unrelated to the case information, Castelo said: "We'll comment on it."

Miss Ignacio said government prosecutors would stick with the deal.

"What do you call giving P130 million to Mr. Estrada? At that time he was the President," Villarosa said, noting a clear element of corruption in the transaction in Ang's delivery of the funds to Polk Street.

He said the closer to the plea bargain deal that said Ang conspired with Estrada to divert the P130 million may also be removed follow-

ing a review.

"It won't be used against Mr. Estrada necessarily. We have no can already take it out. Let's see," he said.

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"Gusto ko makita ni mister ang makulay naming Bagong Taon."

Melo panel tags Palparan in slays

From page A1

Melo confirmed that among those mentioned in the fact-finding report was Palparan, who retired in September 2006. Lobo Lobo groups had labelled Palparan "berdugo" for the spate of killings during his tenure as brigade and division commander in Masbate and Samar provinces, respectively. (See In the Know and exercise on Page A11.

"There are several pages there on Palparan. We know he has said he resigned them. You can look the file through the master," Melo said.

Melo was referring to a media interview given by Palparan where he admitted he had "disciplined" some people in "outside" suspected New People's Army rebels who had committed crimes in their communities.

Palparan was one of four military officials who testified before the commission. They were the only witnesses who responded to the commission's invitation.

Leftist groups had boycotted the hearings of the commission, saying it lacked credibility and indepen-dence.

Aside from Melo, the other commission members were National Bureau of Investigation Director Nestor Mantaring, Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuño, University of the Philippines Professor Merlin Gonzales and Bataan City Bishop Juan de Dios Pueblos.

Gov't response unsatisfactory

On Sunday, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines issued a pastoral statement saying that the response by the government and the military to the allegations of extrajudicial killings was "more reminiscent of (and) their preservation of concealment not seeking."

The bishops blamed the killings on leftist and rightist groups.

The motive for the killing of Dr. Lozas was not immediately known, but SPO1 Jesus Fabios said he would not discount the possibility that the victim's involvement in Bayan Muna could be the reason.

Dr. Lozas was brought to the Bataan Provincial Hospital but the doctors there declared him dead on arrival. Fabios said the assailant used a .45-cal. pistol.

The attackers were described as being between 25 and 30 years old.

Dr. Lozas's wife Concepcion, who is a Bayan provincial coordinator and provincial board member, could not be reached for comment.

However, Emma Castillo, Bayan regional coordinator, said Concepcion had told her that after mass her husband had been receiving death threats.

Samar Vice Gov. Jose Robale said that he had asked police authorities in Catbalogan to solve the latest killing.

'Not decisively cure'

"They should act decisively now and show the people that they really have the ability to solve a crime-incident, regardless of the position in society of the victims. This is too much for us to ignore," Robale said in a phone interview.

On Jan. 17, Augusto Zacilan, 53, a former member of the New People's Army and provincial secretary of the left-wing nationalist group Alliance of Nationalists and Democrats, was gunned down. This was followed two days later by the killing of another "military asset," Alfonso Infalla, 58.

Both cases have remained unsolved.

In Catarman, Northern Samar, Jose Maria Cui, 53, Bayan provincial coordinator, was killed on Friday in front of his students at the University of the Eastern Philippines.

In Tacloban City, the regional spokesperson of Bayan, Fidel Ache, 34, escaped an ambush attempt last week by two motorcycle-riding armed men in Barangay Viola Riles.

IN THE KNOW

Who is Palparan?

RETIRED MAJ. GEN. JOVITO PALparan, branded a "berdugo (butcher)" by activists, has been blamed for hundreds of cases of human rights violations in the provinces of the country.

Despite the accusations, Arroyo's administration has praised Palparan for his exemplary performance as counterinsurgency operations.

The President awarded Palparan a DSSC for "Gawad sa Kaunlaran" and made him a brigadier general in January 2005. The following year, he was promoted to major general and appointed chief of staff of the Army.

Militant organizations allege that Palparan was responsible for 320 human rights cases, including about 80 killings, in Masbate during his term as head of the Army's 203rd Infantry Brigade from 2000 to 2003.

In February 2006, he was included in the list of military officers named in the Melo report.

There, he was accused of masterminding 19 cases of killings, disappearances, harassment, torture and other violations.

In September 2006, he took command of the 7th ID in Eastern Mindanao by Sunni Rajas. Within a month, 13 leaders and members of party-list group Bayan Muna and its affiliate organizations in Central Luzon were reported killed.

Before he retired on Sept. 7, 2006, the then President Arroyo had Palparan flat he was a "dead man walking."

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said in October and year that he was meeting Palparan to brainstorm on intelligence and security advisor terms department.

Palparan was born on Sept. 11, 1950, in Sagpon in Oro City, and grew up in his father's hometown of Barobog, Southern Leyte. He joined the Armed Forces in 1974.

Cyrill L. Bonoan

'Killings not part of our operations'

From page A1

spreadability is," he told the inquirers by phone on Monday.

By his explanations, command responsibility means accountability for the results of military operations, what his command launched were "legitimate military operations," Palparan said.

"Killings, even abductions, are not part of our operations," he insisted.

When he was in active service, Palparan deployed special operations teams to urban and rural areas believed to be the highest, financial and most support of communist rebels. At the same time, he had his tactical guerrilla fronts, he said days before his retirement.

The General Luzon chapter of the human rights group European has listed 126 cases of abuse during Palparan's stint in the region. On the list are 71 cases of forced disappearances, 11 frustrated killings and 46 disappearances in all of the regions seven provinces as of Sept. 2, 2006.

But in Monday's interview, Palparan said he "suspected that some military men may have been involved in the killings to get back at rebels who killed their kin." He did not elaborate.

Accusations 'very general'

Army chief Lt. Gen. Romeo Tolentino, former commander of the military's Northern Luzon Command, under which Palparan's command operated, said the Melo Commission "still has to prove that soldiers were actually involved (in the killings)."

"The accusations are very general," Tolentino said by phone.

While he confirmed that the military practiced command responsibility as a policy, he said the commission would still have to determine at what level the responsibility fell.

Tolentino said he had made "unofficial inquiries" about the killings to find out if soldiers of Charlie Battalion, 203rd Infantry Brigade, had a hand in any of those incidents.

Of the cases mentioned by the inquirers, only one soldier had been charged and this was in connection with the murder of Bonifacio Ilagan, president of the Central Azucarera de Tarlac Labor Union on Dec. 21, 2005.

GMA calls for 4-party summit on May polls

From page A1

To pave the way for nonpartisan and peaceful polls, she called for a summit with the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), the Commission on Elections, police watchdogs and police.

"We assure the CBCP and the Filipino people that this administration will police its own ranks to prevent and advance all democratic processes," Ms Arroyo said in a statement.

Elections in the Philippines are often stormy, accompanied by a rise in political killings and allegations of cheating on all sides.

The President's statement came in the CBCP pastoral letter that offered guidance to the Catholic faithful in the May polls.

She did not address the CBCP statement on Sunday that many of the country's political problems could be traced to "questionable appointments, including the conduct of the past elections," which included the "Hello Garci" scandal that marred the 2004 presidential election.

The pastoral letter said the controversies with the Arroyo administration and its other issues "have only served to divide the people and lay them open to further conflict."

The bishops also urged the government to "address the root causes of the violence that continue to plague our country."

Ms Arroyo's Roxas allies were able to use their overwhelming numbers to block two impeachment bids against her.

In an interview, Ms Arroyo told reporters that she was heeding the call of the Church and nongovernment organizations and that they should "try to work together to see how in fact we can make sure that (clean, honest and orderly elections) is achieved."

Facilitator

"I asked (Cabinet Secretary) Eric Saludo to be the one to touch base with the exec we feel will be willing to work with and friendly terms and maintain the facilitator," Ms Arroyo said.

In a statement, Mr Arroyo asked participants to line up a "comprehensive plan on stabilization" that will include "round monitoring to possible areas of fraud, manipulation poll procedures, and checks on illegal spending."

She called on "candidates from all sides to come together in fair and friendly terms and maximize their collective political maturity and bolster their platforms by propose and development plans instead of the usual dirty politics."

"Part of our quest to join the ranks of the First World in 20 years is to clean up the polls and let everyone take the first step forward," the President said.

Abalos for Feb. 12 summit

The Comelec welcomed Ms Arroyo's call for a four-party summit.

"It's a beautiful idea," said Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr.

He suggested that the summit be held on Feb. 12, or after the end of the filing of the certificates of candidacy for senators and party-list groups.

"The political candidates/parties in our country as well as/among the citizens are already here and there are still no final lineups of candidates," Abalos said.

Candidates' forum

The election watchdog Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting offered its services with the Comelec's "candidates' forum" to discuss how the polls could be kept clean and honest, the Comelec chief said.

Abalos also welcomed the CBCP call for vigilance during the election to ensure the sanctity of the ballot. With a report from AP

Loren, Chiz spurn Palace offer of slots …

From page A1

confirmed the talks with Legarda, and former opposition Senators Vicente Sotto III and Teofisto Guingona, said there were no ongoing talks with the Arroyo administration.

President Chief of Staff Michael Defensor said he was not aware of any discussions with Escudero, who is his friend.

Sen. Edgardo Angara, leader of the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino (LDP), said his party had joined forces with the Nacionalista and Liberal parties to endorse Villar's "Team Unity."

He said the Third Force would hold a complete senatorial slate to be composed of nonbroadcast senators and members from the three parties.

Angara said these NP presidents Manuel Vil-

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Palparan on slays

From page A1

lar, the coalition's titular head, would make a formal announcement of the coalition's senatorial lineup next week.

"This middle force idea is going to push," Angara said in an interview. "This is really a genuine choice for the people."

Patching up with Ping

Angara said he would meet on partisan matters with Sen. Panfilo Lacson, his political comrade, if they could agree on the same ticket.

"I don't have a problem with him, right?" he said, adding that his differences with Lacson were personal in nature and not concern of principle.

On reports about his possible inclusion in the administration lineup, Angara said there was no way that members of their coalition would join it.

Asserting to dispel statements about them being possible on the same ticket, Lacson said: "It is not for us to say that we may or should may under one ticket. It is a matter of consensus among the different leaders of the broad coalition of political parties, civil society, religious and other opposition forces."

Liberals also meeting

Also off and running, the Liberal Party wing of Sen. Franklin Drilon yesterday officially presented Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan and Taguig Rep. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III as its candidates for the Senate.

The group made the announcement at the 52nd Cojuangco anniversary celebration held at Club Filipino.

Pangilinan and Aquino accepted the nominations.

In a surprise move, LP spokesperson Chiz Gascon also nominated Bukidnon Rep. Nereus Acosta, Quezon Rep. Lorenzo Tañada III, Mandaluyong Rep. Rufino Biazon and former Bataan Rep. Florencio "Butch" Abad as possible candidates.

Until yesterday's announcement, only Pangilinan and Aquino had been regarded as the party's serious candidates. The nominations of the four others are seen as a party strategy to gain leverage in its ongoing coalition talks with the other parties.

Drilon said the party would submit the names of the six "potential candidates" to its executive committee, Nacionalista Party chairperson Manuel Villar, Nacionalista Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino, and UNO's Pwersa ng Masang Pilipino and PDP-Laban.

Abad, LP vice president for policy said that the move was designed to offset the "creation of the unified opposition" as an offshoot of desertions.

"It means that the opposition is disintegrating so I think it's important that the party is prepared to constitute a real opposition, a unified slate," he told reporters.

Santa's search

"We don't want the ranks of a unified, genuine opposition to be eroded simply by defections to the other side because Malacañang is actively maneuvering to try to divide and weaken what we originally built as a unified, solid, winning opposition slate."

Sonia Roco, widow of the late Sen. Raul Roco, is still shopping around for a coalition to join in her bid for a Senate seat.

Roco said at the Bagkatan in Manila forum: "I'm looking for a coalition. Hopefully, we will find the right one or we will be credible in the Filipino voters."

She also said: "I cannot be administrator. The last time I (ran) my husband was (there) and I know forever calling for unity from 2001. I have been calling for unity and reconciliation," she said, responding to questions in a one-on-one interview with reporters.

But Ms. Roco made it clear during the interview that she did not want to talk about details of her campaign, as the political rivals who are taking turn of that, not me."

"All I can say is I am going to concentrate on my work," she said.

Bro. Mike also helping

Iglesia Ni Cristo leader Bro. Mike Velarde himself is keen about the Team Unity concept being pushed by the administration coalition but wants Mr. Roxas to have no hand in the formation of a hybrid senatorial slate.

A confidant of Velarde said the tension that the influential religious leader met in the past week with top political strategists of the coalition who were attempting to get his endorsement for the proposed senatorial slate.

The confidant said that Velarde was "ok for" the formation of such a team but that "Brother Mike wants the President to take a supportive stand in the election."

"This means that she should refrain from influencing who will be on the unity ticket," the confidant said, adding that Velarde wanted Mr. Roxas to have a free hand in the local government officials. With reports from TJ Burgonio, Jill C. Cabangangan Jr., Doris G. Bonoan and Leila B. Salaverria

Women in power less afraid to show soft side

By Associated Press

mothers and/or grandmothers.

For some, the questions were complicated. Is this a throwback, or a step forward? Is it politically smart?

No need to be defensive

For a long time women seeking high office, particularly an executive office, were advised to play down their softer, domestic side, and play up their toughness. Focus groups often found voters deeply concerned about whether women were strong enough, tough enough, to lead.

Today, many political strategists say that women no longer have to be so defensive.

Voters have grown more accustomed to women in powerful positions.

Motherhood and a focus on children can become one more political asset to be showcased and embraced—a way of humanizing a candidate and connecting with voters, especially other women, strategists say.

Pelosi took the Speaker's gavel in a carefully structured tableau filled with children, some of them her own grandchildren.

Clinton held the first event of her presidential campaign surrounded by children, clutching the hand of a 4-year-old girl at a health care clinic, where she announced her support for expanded health coverage for children.

Aides to Pelosi and Clinton object to the idea that their actions were symbolic.

Pelosi did, in fact, raise five children before she ran for office, and Clinton raised one and has been an advocate on children's issues since her days in law school.

CLINTON

PELOSI

Good political reasons

But it's the candidates who decide how to tell their story, and there are good political reasons for Pelosi and Clinton to highlight the maternal.

For Pelosi, relentlessly caricatured by the Republicans last year as a hard-edged, ear-ruining liberal, the image of mother and grandmother takes the edge off the ideological cartoons.

As Karen O'Connor, director of the Women and Politics Institute at American University, puts it: "Her beauty Pelosi. A heroine, 'OK, um I going to be the San Francisco liberal, or the strong woman who refuses to sit wrong women, because I've raised five kids, I have several more dotted grandchildren and I can also run your House.'"

For Clinton, highlighting the maternal is a way of building on what polls and campaign strategists see her clear advantages, like strength and intelligence, while compensating for what are widely considered her liabilities—a coolness, an excess of caution and a capacity to on occasion lack the electronic that many voters question her ability to win. New York Times News Service

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

Alarming diplomacy

EDITORIAL

TRUST THE PRESIDENT'S DAUGHTER LUI TO have a better sense of order and justice, and a higher sense of the nation's sovereignty than most of the Cabinet members—or probably, even the President herself.

Last Saturday, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said the Department of Justice was pursuing charges against 30 Chinese fishermen caught poaching last month in the Tubbataha Reefs National Marine Park. Gonzalez said the government was not dropping the case against the Chinese fishermen, after he learned that Luli Arroyo was watching the case closely and was not happy about the poachers being allowed to go scot-free.

The Chinese poachers, who had been caught for intruding into the protected waters of the Tubbataha Reef, were released last week. The fishermen's group Pamalakaya said they were released after Chinese Ambassador Li Jinjun made a demand in a letter to Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo and Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap. Fernando Hicap, Pamalakaya chair, accused Romulo and Yap of conspiring with Ambassador "in selling the country's national sovereignty and patrimony to Chinese invaders."

The 30 Chinese fishermen were arrested by the Coast Guard last Dec. 21 for illegal fishing off Tubbataha Reef in southern Palawan. They were charged with violating the National Integrated Protected Areas System Act, the Fisheries Code and Wildlife Act of the Philippines, and a provincial ordinance banning commercial fishing vessels from the Tubbataha Reef. If found guilty the 30 Chinese could be jailed for 12 to 20 years and fined P120,000 each.

Found aboard their ship "Hoi Wan" were at least 1,300 endangered fish species, including 300 marung (Napoleon wrasse), 500 lapu-lapu and 500 red snappers. Also found aboard the ship were 11 kerapons (small boats) and several air compressors that were apparently being used for illegal fishing activities.

Six of the 30 Chinese fishermen were released on bail early this month in that they could look after their vessel docked in the Puerto Princesa Port. The remaining 24 were also later allowed to post bail. At this point we don't know if the 30 fishermen are still in the Philippines or if they have left the country and are now physically beyond the reach of Philippine law.

The case of the 30 Chinese poachers is not the first, neither do we expect it to be the last. Last March 29, 15 Chinese fishermen convicted of poaching on Philippine waters were pardoned by President Macapagal-Arroyo and ordered expelled by the Bureau of Immigration.

In September, two Chinese poachers were arrested for killing endangered turtles and poisoning hectares of coral reefs by using sodium cyanide. They were later released upon the intercession of the Department of Foreign Affairs without the filing of any charges.

On Oct. 24, Chinese fishermen were caught fishing illegally off the coast of Palawan. They were charged with illegal fishing, poaching in Philippine waters and catching endangered species, but after that nothing was heard about them. Then came the latest case of the 30 Chinese fishermen.

Sen. Ramon Magsaysay said that of the 900 foreigners caught poaching in the waters off Palawan, 680 were Chinese. Almost all of the arrested fishermen escaped prosecution by leaving the country after posting bail, except for the 17 who were arrested in 2004 in Balabac. Those were the 17 recently pardoned by the President and released after they paid a P8,000 fine.

Poaching in Philippine waters by foreign fishermen has reached alarming proportions, undoubtedly encouraged by the climate of leniency and impunity created by those by Philippine officials who are charged with enforcing the nation's laws and upholding national sovereignty.

This state of affairs has to stop if we are to preserve our marine environment and conserve food sources for our fishermen and our children. The nation's patrimony and sovereignty cannot be sacrificed in favor of diplomatic relations. The Department of Justice and the DFA have to stop doing the dirty work of freeing poachers caught fishing illegally in Philippine waters.

In the "Pacole" tape case, the government allowed the transfer of the convicted Mariose Initia from a Philippine jail to the US thinking, all in the name of good RP-US relations. Now, the Philippine government is again bending over backwards, fearing ground Chinese poachers, all in the name of RP-Chinese relations. How can we expect other nations to respect us when we allow ourselves to be bullied by other countries?

Burdens of disease

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

"WEALTH IS THE SECOND BLESSING WE mortals are capable of," Ursula Nadeau once wrote. I can't recall the first. But the four of falling ill haunts all, especially the poor. That concern stems from their experience with government's inadequate health systems: at local drugstores, some medicines are priced 5 to 10 times more than in other countries.

Those battling for election replace this anxiety. Cebu City Mayor Tomas Osmeña, for example, gave Phil Health cards, valid for a year, to 35,000 beneficiaries (aka voters). Could this be misconstrued as pabitaog? "It's not misconstrued," he scoffed, "It's what it is."

It is, in fact, illegal.

The health cards lapse after the votes are tallied. But many candidates ignore a more basic issue: The "epidemiological transition" that is sweeping through Asian countries. Harvard University and World Health Organization report that the patterns of diseases and deaths are dramatically changing to poor countries like the Philippines ... and winning health systems.

While maladies of the past—once dominated, ailments of the affluent are creeping with a vengeance. Harvard and WHO note in their study: "The United States of Europe, Canada, Australia ... diarrhea, pneumonia, measles, dengue, infant malnutrition are being rapidly overtaken by stroke, diabetes, obesity etc."

Only the very poorest countries have not entered this transition or who now type diseases. For example, found that "1-in-10 to 1-in-20 of those aged over 30 had diabetes. And an equal number showed pre-diabetes." Strokes were spreading.

"Obesities" diseases will ravage the cholesterol splashy of the Philippines, Indonesia, Nepal or Dallas. But in affluent and urbanized Singapore, Germany, Korea or Hong Kong, as well as in the "gated enclaves" of the rich here, fat-saturated diets, sedentary lifestyles and obesity haunt the incidences of chronic diseases.

Quick to point, the overfed and ill-nourished suffer their differing ailments. "Paintaines goodly in gaols" has popularized the fat-reducing Scotch. But chronic hunger claims 11-out of every 100 kids, "Philippine Human Development Report 2005" points out. And 26 percent of infants are years' underweights. In Cebu, 28 out of every 100 don't have access to safe potable water.

Scientists have crafted new "basins of disease" indicators to mark this transition's effects. Used since the mid 1990s, this new gauge adds up "life years lost due to diseases" and early graves, meaning, years wasted by pre-mature deaths, University of Ulster's R.R. Jamani and Houston's A. Bhargava explain.

The novel tape measure is known as "Daly"—short for the "disability adjusted life years lost per thousand of population." Among other things, "Daly's" found that the total life years lost per 1,000 Filipinos—like the 5.6 billion here, women and children who live in Asia today—amounted to 239 years.

Leaders of such magnitude can beggar a nation. But they expect the rest to be transformed into their agendas. Hence, they are blind to the implications of a warning from the Asian Development Bank: The new phases of this "transition in this burden of disease" do not believe in suspense. In fact, they interlock.

In a study, Jamani and partner examines "these a common predicament: that of an overlapping health transition." ADB's Bhargava points out. Nations like the Philippines do not have the option of solving one crisis at a time. Instead, "they must tackle simultaneously problems the western world had the privilege of tackling sequentially." Emerging Asia will not have that "luxury."

But problems spill far beyond the cutting of the ballot. Health will be number in the future, as populations age, ADB cautions. Intricate groups in cities will seek to close limited budgets toward the treatment of their chronic diseases. "This will polarizers the divide/cottage on the poor."

Indeed, nasty countries should see "countries Western-style practice-driven programs," adds Dr. Bruce Neal. "[They] provide a high cost solution for the wealthy few." Filipinos in hotels the equivalent of $1774 per capita for health, UNDP's Human Development Report notes. The comparative figure for Malaysians is $274 and $1,071 for Germans.

Over watched, underequipped and underpaid municipal health workers down the health gap for most Filipinos, on a daily basis, in 79 provinces and 117 cities. They tap into the rich store of traditional medicinal plants from Indonesia for coughs to anti-piles for diabetes.

It's an uphill fight. As an Inquirer "Talk of the Town" feature asked: Were multinational drug lobbies, with a lot of susceptible doctors, behind the downgrading of pharmacy (medicine chanting), long listed as a scientifically validated medicinal plant? That move bankrupted thousands of small sampaguita farmers. And it stripped municipal health workers of a key source of kita.

Now, Health Secretary Francisco Duque is reported to have dusted the scientific studies on sampaguita that were shoved under the rug. He could reinstate the plant—and turn attention to the next 14 medicinal plants that health workers could use.

"Two Cebu University studies, in Cebu mountains, found over 200 medicinal plants," Dr. Peter Stoltenberg reported. "But only one has been controversially exploited ... mangosteen."

(E-mail: jmercado@gmail.com)

Conspirator

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I REMEMBER THAT THERE WAS MUCH debate among the Conspiracy Cult people about whether to charge customs fees at the gate or only at the "Bistro Room." The place has a garden corridor, which is where people who just want to talk long around, and a small room inside which is where people who want to listen to the performers perform endlessly.

Eventually, proponents of the latter won out. The speakers aimed at the garden so exactly the patrons there to hear the performances as well were taken out, and only the music went charged at customs fee. It used to restore. Only those patrons who chose to loiter in the rooms of the musical, and magical, strings inside needed to pay for it. Listening in those days was a luxury, as it is nowadays, and one that came at no small a price.

I recall this now with no small amusement. Because those concerns, which elicited much passionate discussion, were dwarfed by those of Conspiracy's neighbors out back. Conspiracy is located in Visayas Avenue, Quezon City, a commercial area. But the neighborhood at the back of Visayas Avenue is residential. Unfortunately for Conspiracy, it happened to be in proximity with a residents, or residents—a middle-aged couple—who did not share its view about the fabulous merits of its musical offerings. Indeed, a couple who believed those people shouldn't have to pay to listen to those things, they have to be paid to do so. Despite Conspiracy's forms of love to loudest to sound, some of it apparently continued to escape through to their ears.

That was the reason patrons found a huge sign at Conspiracy's last Tuesday night announcing that the place was being closed by order of City Hall. The neighbor, who apparently had some connection with City Hall, lodged a complaint, and City Hall ordered Conspiracy to cease and desist from opening "noise pollution" City noise, that is. Which is not exactly just getting that on the title for the new album of any of the artists involved with Conspiracy—"Noise Pollution," huh! It is grand for an Gary Granada song, gang's almost title! Or title of a song!

Unfortunately, a couple of things were lined up last Tuesday at Conspiracy. They were the band launching of Charlson Ong's novel, "Banyaga: A Song of War," published by Anvil, and a session with Fenton Broad, Dry Hall, with its tremendous talent for making life enjoyable for the patrons, turned the session earlier at 6:00 p.m. with an almost gleeful view to making an appeal not to impossible. Party lyrists may be petty, but they are, eh, scripture-tent. Happily, the Conspiracy people—by dint of cajoling, badgering and pleading—were able to make the term an impossible possible. And were able to bargain at least for the concession of the book launching. Happily, too, Eros Bolisco, in dint of tacking up a notice further in cell phone bills, managed to secure all and sundry the terms was pushing through: it ceased at the request, written, of the artists and patrons came through. They came late, but they came—and were game, singing them selves hoarse afterward. Now that, I grant, Conspiracy has to pay people to listen to.

The reason I am writing about all this is that the eloquent reason, the thing got blown out of proportion and lost. Even TV radio and newspapers. I got to be interviewed a couple of times because my name kept cropping up as the owner of, or one of the partners in, Conspiracy. I've had to explain that though I am proud to be a "Conspirator," I am nowhere near to owning it. Nobody is. Conspiracy is the brainchild of Gary Granada who conceived with fellow singers Noel Cabangon, Barong Barrios, Cynthia Alexander, Joey Ayala and Cindy Chan to put it up. They invited other people to join the conspiracy and last I looked, some 150 people had done so—artists, MGO people, and client lovers of music, however some might disapprove the term. You can't zero more than five shares, at P15,000 pel. I claim the princely sum of two shares. The place itself is rich only in goodwill, creativity and talent.

I've had to explain two other things as well. One, it is one less than the place was then down the cultural tourism. Surprisingly, that one reason flew off faster than a speeding bullet. Conspiracy's attempt at mischievous humor finally catching up with itself. No. OMA had nothing to do with it. Conspiracy being engaged only in dark plots to torture more patrons to survive the horrible business of running under law. True, it is not true that the place has been operating without a business permit. The only reason it does not have one physically is in hands is that City Hall refuses to release it in light of its complaint. But Conspiracy has been operating for close to a year. It has been certified, the dozen boring only 24 hours. An inspector from City Hall found the place to have exceedingly complied with demands to create its sound. Quite unhappily though, it was now offic only "acoustic music." Electronically doing not require patrons to just stand there, which are boring pa ticular. But you never know, maybe, sometimes how one philanthropist on three might want to offer to soundproof the place completely (which is costly) and make everybody happy.

I have my own reasons to be happy at the resurgence of the Conspiracy. I think I think its views, as the complainant, profitably. It's that I've just gotten all the editorial time I need to achieve the Conspiracy shamelessly.

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Korean invasion

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cassman

BEFORE CLOSING MY FILES ON TSUNAMIS AND Tran Asia Summits in Cebu City a few more items must be noted. Many people have yet to see the televised coverage of the Asian Cuisine Showcase to show that we superbly produced and directed by Lydia Aquino Sachdeva-Sison. Readers are requesting me this non-resident correspondent, a resident in Pampanga, to re-show over WBN-4. How know that the viewers surprise extras, with the pleasant American-Asian accent, was none other than San Francisco-based journalist Iris Kashdan-Isaac, formerly of Capitol Publishing.

By the way, did you know that when the Cebu Summit was postponed last December, the Manila Chamber La Isla del mundo unveiled upwards of several hundred? Some of those wouldn't be put to good use in Cebu and Davao but there would enough not to change the government a cent for it.

* * *

The three-weekend shuffle caused to the finish of the Asian Cup last Saturday meeting between the leaders of China, Japan and South Korea, which was held in a small cottage specially constructed by the Philippine government's right by the beach at Manila's Bonifacio Resort Hotel. And they had good reason to meet.

* * *

Over the past many years, it had been customary for the heads of state of these three Confucian countries to meet with the Philippine president during or for the in the past three years, no such meeting had taken place, as relations between China and South Korea on one hand, and Japan on the other had become strained over the visits of former Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine—which the two other former occupied countries had resented. At Manila, for the first time in three years, Prime Ministers Shinzo Abe and Wen Jiabao and President Roh Moo-hyun dismissed themselves with just their secretaries for dinner on Sunday while their aides and ambassadors huddled in the next room. Korean ambassador Hong Jong-ki later told this columnist that the meeting was "very good" because it was the first time, the flow of trade and other economic issues in the region, and the possible impact of uranium-enriching activities by North Korea, were discussed from the northern part of China on the southern tiers. The summit was said to have gone smoothly, deadlines helped by the holiday mood in the air.

* * *

Speaker Jose de Venecia played host last week to his counterpart, Speaker Lim Chae-Jung of the Republic of Korea's National Assembly, whose visit was initially intended, aside from Mme. Lim, MP Chung Eui-yong, other leaders who formed the ruling Uri Party of Mr. Roh and with China rendered a dinner for the 19th last Thursday, and over the weekend, their wives were treated to a Tagaytay Highlands and Baguio City where he scientifically broke many high-value fish. Over a seafood picnic at 2,000 feet above sea level

PSALM
POWER SECTOR ASSETS & LIABILITIES MANAGEMENT CORPORATION
2nd Floor, SSV II Building, Ayala Avenue, Makati City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

For the

SUPPLY, DELIVERY, INSTALLATION, TESTING AND COMMISSIONING OF OFFICE FURNISHINGS, AUDIO/VIDEO EQUIPMENT AND AIRCONDITIONING SYSTEMS FOR PSALM OFFICE AT SEVENTH FLOOR BANKMAR BUILDING, MAKATI CITY

1. The PSALM Corporation (PSALM) Corporate Operating Budget intends to apply the sum of FORTY-NINE MILLION EIGHT HUNDRED FIFTY-NINE THOUSAND AND NINETY-SEVEN PESOS AND 20 CENTAVOS (P49,859,097.20) being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the above project. Bids received that exceed the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.
2. The PROCURING ENTITY now invites Bids from eligible Bidders for:

Schedule	Description	Qty.	Units	APPROVED BUDGET FOR THE CONTRACT
I	Supply, Delivery, Installation and Commissioning of Air-conditioning System	1	Lot	Php 44,629,12 inclusive of VAT
II	Supply, Delivery and Installation of Office Furnishings	1	Lot	Php 5,229,965.08 inclusive of VAT
	Total			Php 4,857,181.28

AT SEVENTH FLOOR BANKMAR BUILDING, AYALA AVENUE, MAKATI CITY. The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents. **ITB**

3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part II (IRR-A) of R.A. 9184, and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, partnerships, or organizations with at least seventy-five percent (75%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to R.A. 5183. Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents. **ITB** The Bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine the compliance of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder who meets all requirements set forth during the post-qualification procedures.
4. Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the PROCURING ENTITY and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 8 AM to 5 PM.
5. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of FIVE HUNDRED PESOS ONLY (Php500.00), either in cash or check. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.
6. The PROCURING ENTITY will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on **05 February 2007 at 2:00PM** at the 8/F Bankmar Building, Ayala Avenue, Makati City.
7. Bids and eligibility documents must be delivered to the address below on or before **19 February 2007 at 10:00AM**. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in the form of cash, cashier's check, irrevocable letter of credit (1% of the ABC), bank guarantee (1.5% of ABC) or surety bond (2.5% of the ABC). Late Bids shall not be accepted.
8. Bid opening shall be on **19 February 2007 at 10:10AM** at the 8/F Bankmar Building, Ayala Avenue, Makati City. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend.
9. The PROCURING ENTITY reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management (PSALM) Corporation
Chairperson, Bids and Awards Committee (BAC)
ATTY. HELENA C. TOLENTINO
8/F Bankmar Building, Ayala Avenue, Makati City
Tel: 893-6202; Fax: 840-3696
e-mail: helatolentino@psalm.gov.ph

(Sgd.) ATTY. HELENA C. TOLENTINO
Chairperson, BAC

PSALM
POWER SECTOR ASSETS & LIABILITIES MANAGEMENT CORPORATION
POWER SECTOR ASSETS AND LIABILITIES MANAGEMENT CORPORATION
2nd Floor, SSV II Building, Ayala Avenue, Makati City

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

For the

SUPPLY, DELIVERY, INSTALLATION, TESTING AND COMMISSIONING OF AIRCONDITIONING SYSTEMS AT PSALM OFFICE, 3F TRANSCO POWER TRAINING CENTER, DILIMAN, QUEZON CITY

1. The PSALM Corporation (PSALM) Corporate Operating Budget intends to apply the sum of **TWO HUNDRED NINETY THOUSAND PESOS ONLY (Php290,000.00)** being the approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the above project. Bids received that exceed the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.
2. The PROCURING ENTITY now invites Bids from eligible Bidders for:

Description	Qty.	Units	APPROVED BUDGET FOR THE CONTRACT
Air-conditioning System	1	Lot	Php290,000.00 inclusive of VAT

AT PSALM OFFICE, THIRD FLOOR, TRANSCO POWER TRAINING CENTER, DILIMAN, QUEZON CITY. The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents. **ITB**

3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part II (IRR-A) of R.A. 9184, and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, partnerships, or organizations with at least seventy-five percent (75%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to R.A. 5183. Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents. **ITB** The Bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine the compliance of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder who meets all requirements set forth during the post-qualification procedures.
4. Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the PROCURING ENTITY and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 8 AM to 5 PM.
5. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of FIVE HUNDRED PESOS ONLY (Php500.00), either in cash or check. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.
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e-mail: helatolentino@psalm.gov.ph

(Sgd.) Atty. HELENA C. TOLENTINO
Chairperson, BAC

No longer a gov't of the people

WHEN THE GOVERNMENT NO longer acts for the people, it ceases to be "a government of the people, for the people and by the people."

In the way it handled the case of Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith's custody, the Philippine government, specifically the executive branch, cheated us that the interest of the nation is not its primary concern.

The executive department, from President Macapagal-Arroyo, down to Secretary Raul Gonzalez and Secretary Ronaldo Puno, to Presidential Counsel Sergio Apostol and Solicitor General Alicia Austria-Martinez, unwittingly or knowingly, allowed Smith, despite his conviction, to be freed from Philippine custody and transferred to the US Embassy to the detail of night, without a court order.

What they did was reprehensible, a betrayal of the people's trust. What is particularly disturbing to us was the participation of Apostol and Puno, both from the Ateneo Munoz. It should be noted that the team of Malcolgo in Ateneo house, with the regime's support, has been asking for the return of church bells which were taken as war booties by American occupation forces, during the Philippine-American War (for "silver dollars more" from Uncle Sam, the new breed of the conspiracy to dump Philippine sovereignty is to said that the war was ours of a state in dignity and courage, it is sad that in those times when we need exemplars of those values, people in power chose to abandon those values.

By disregarding Smith's conviction by a court, the Arroyo administration acted like a father turning his back on a daughter who is being assaulted by a pack of wolves; it is highly doubtful now that our court can implement a final and executory judgment of conviction.

Naturally, the Court of Appeals had to rule that the custody issue had become "moot and academic." This was the only way out for the appeals court—after all, Smith was already in the hands of the US government.

Besides, a contrary decision would have been unwise in one antagonizes the power that fills the vacancies in the Supreme Court.

Ultimately, the Smith case will be remembered for the way the Arroyo regime humiliated the Filipino people.

LETTERS

GSIS pensioner still waiting for Xmas bonus and pension

MY WIFE IS A GOVERNMENT RETIREE and pensioner who served in the Philippine foreign service for 46 years. She had been receiving her pension and Christmas bonus regularly through the Philippine National Bank—that is, until December 2006.

Recently, the Government Service Insurance System decided to introduce the GSIS e-Card Plus. While this new system, the celebration of GSIS pensioners will be done by ATM, no longer by checks, it took almost a whole day to obtain her new card; but this had to be discarded because our last name was misspelled.

Cebu president and general manager Winston Garcia takes pride in having introduced "efficiency," "modernization," "a giant leap ... for many pensioners."

But are we wary of the rumored "efficiency" of the new e-Card Plus system because when my wife used her card on Jan. 2, 2007, a holiday, we found out that there were no funds in her account. The next day an officer of the bank confirmed that the account was indeed empty in fact, he said, it will remain empty until February 2007.

My wife and I call thank Garcia if he makes good his promise by seeing to it that my wife's 2006 Christmas bonus and January 2007 pension are delivered to her pronto.

—RICARDO VILLEBRANA, 13 Senator Ojeda St., Barangay Ballyadan, Quezon City 1103

An oil price question

IT'S BEEN WEEKS SINCE THE PRICE OF OIL slid on a 19 month low line, unfortunately it is still the usual mad pace "rollback" being implemented.

Unlike when the prices of oil go up in the world market, the corresponding adjustments are immediately made effective regardless of the inventory while under-recoveries are postponed up to the last drop.

So, guess who is on the losing end?

—RENATO LOCARDO, 1220 Hanford St., Cubao, Quezon City

DILG violated due process in 'Iloilo raid'

THE GOVERNOR OF REGION 6 (PEOPLE'S Visayas) may strongly oppose and manifest our support for our colleague, Gov. Niel Tupas of Iloilo, who now faces dismissal order from the Ombudsman. The order is being enforced by the Department of the Interior and Local Government.

In the local chief executive of a province which is a major and key player in the economic and tourism development of Region 6, however, Tupas has been very cooperative and supportive of the programs of the national government through the Regional Development Council (RDC). The hasty and harsh decision to declare him penally disbarred and slaves in state, apparently, the manner by which the dictated order was carried out did not allow him the opportunity and right to seek the remedies and reliefs afforded to him by our Constitution and laws. The governor was denied of the constitutional guarantees of due process and of the full and equal protection of the law. Governor Tupas is extremely popular and well-respected leader of the province.

We strongly feel that what was done to him will surely weaken the confidence of the people of Iloilo and Region 6 in the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo, who has been trying to unite our divided nation.

In this light, we, the governors of Region 6, strongly call for due process to be observed in the enforcement of the order dismissing Governor Tupas. We recognize and respect that the right is to dismiss but also he being an elected official of the province of Iloilo, who is sworn to serve and protect the interests of his constituents under a regime that adheres to the rule of law.

—FRANCIS G. BEDIONG, governor, Capiz; JOSEPH E. MARAVILLA, governor, Negros Occidental; CARLITOS MARQUEZ, governor, Aklan; ROGELIO CARLOS G. SUAN, governor, Guimaras; SARAH JANE I. ELEFANTE, governor, Antique

An insane government

MILTON OLIVARES CENTARAS' LETTER sounded the abolition of the Senate because, according to him, there is no need to maintain the incumbent senators or to join them in that body are their dear relatives—siblings and sons, among others. This is insane. Common sense.

The fact is, many members of the House of Representatives are also relatives. Do some insanity? And this is why we have manifestations in all levels of local governments—at the provincial, city, municipality and barangay levels.

Following Centaras's logic, the government is indeed becoming "insane."

—ROLAN LERIT, lerit_bgg@yahoo.com

If you have any complaints, grievances or suggestions regarding the treatment of news and photos by the Inquirer, you may address it to the Readers' Advocate, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue, corner Tegar and Macapagal Streets, City of Makati or send a fax to Nos. 897-4753, 897-4794, or e-mail readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph.

Notices of letters to the editor are requested to include clear, complete address and telephone or paper number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT
National Capital Region
DY 844 Bldg., 1000 Rizal Boulevard
cor. General Malvar St., Manila, Manila

NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATION/S FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMIT/S (AEP/S)

Notice is hereby given that the following company/employer(s) have filed with this Regional Office applications for Alien Employment Permit/s:

Name and address of Company/Employer	Name of Foreign National	Position
MTS MAGIC TRAVEL & TOURS, INC. 1555 Estrella Street, MTS Estrella St., Bonifacio, Manila	Ledge Park	Supervisor
STANDARD CHARTERED BANK 1286 Ayala Ave., San Lorenzo Village, Makati City	Ma Carmen Acquino	VP, Central Manager Wealth Management
MTS MAGIC TRAVEL & TOURS AGENCY, INC. 1555 Estrella Street, MTS Estrella St., Bonifacio, Manila	Sung Gue Choi	President
JOHNSON DIVERSEY PHILIPPINES, INC. 2nd Floor Bonifacio Center, Cnr. Old Pasay Rd., Makati City	Alexandra Jan	Managing Director
GCS PHILIPPINES, INC. 8F Solinda Tower, Valero St. Salcedo Village, Makati City	Gabriel Peter Edwards	President
HUAWEI TECHNOLOGIES PHILIPPINES, INC. e-GEC PECOM Tower, Ayala Ave., cor. Valero St., Salcedo Village, Makati City	Yi Jiang	Training Manager Planning and Design Engineer
HUAWEI TECHNOLOGIES PHILIPPINES, INC. e-GEC PECOM Tower, Ayala Ave., cor. Valero St., Salcedo Village, Makati City	Wei Yuan	Sales Management Director
LEGAZPI & CLARK ENTERPRISES CORPORATION 1154 Estrella St., Kneta Manila	Ma Lourdes Ng	Treasurer and Quality Assurance Manager
HUAWEI TECHNOLOGIES PHILIPPINES INC. e-GEC PECOM Tower, Ayala Ave., cor. Valero St., Salcedo Village, Makati City	Yujie Zhang	Sales Management and Administration Director
ZEN EQUIPMENT TRADING CORPORATION #53 E. Rodriguez Sr. Ligaya, Mandaluyong City	Douglas Cole	General Manager
EXPEX ASIA INC. 2/F Robinsons Summit Bldg., 6783 Ayala Ave., Makati City	Kevin Jo Lee	Human Client Support
EXECUTIVE INTERNATIONAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, INC. 1147 J. Basa St. Legaspi Towers 300, Salcedo Village, Makati City	Jeremy Alexander Cockroft	Regional Manager Business Development and Support
MANCOM MAINTAINED MANPOWER AGENCY CORPORATION #14 Gen. Malvar St., cor. Bonifacio Drive, Lucena City, Quezon City	Jose Dan Ilao	Personnel Supervisor
MAKADIA RESTAURANT 1575 R.H. Del Pilar St., Binondo, Manila	Jun Kevin Chiang	Operations Manager

If you have any information objection to the above-mentioned applications please communicate with this Regional Director.

LEONARDO B. TRAMONTE
Regional Director

Across the NATION

Guns fall silent in besieged villages

COTABATO CITY—THE SEPARATIST MORO Islamic Liberation Front has agreed to end hostilities in a North Cotabato town that has killed five people and threatened to cut short efforts to bring the rebels and the government to a peace agreement.

Brig. Gen. Eduardo Ano, chief of the government's ceasefire monitoring committee for cessation of hostilities, said the International Monitoring Team (IMT) agreed to send peacekeeping forces to the site of the clashes.

The Malaysia-led IMT, which monitors a ceasefire agreement between the MILF and the government, also agreed to set up a ceasefire monitoring assistance team to prevent future clashes.

Three rebels and three militiamen were killed and as many as 2,000 families were displaced in the fighting.

The truce is composed of two representatives each from the IMT, government and the MILF Garrison said.

He urged other civil society groups to volunteer to become part of the team.

The MILF said it issued "reproaches" in favor away from the farming village of Bangolan and Mudseng. The military, it said, had also agreed to pull out.

The fighting occurred after MILF rebels daylied the Army and attacked soldiers who came to protect the residents on Jan. 23.

Fr. Eliet Layoso, a peace advocate involved in the rehabilitation of war-torn areas in North Cotabato, said at least 5,000 people had been displaced by the fighting.

Mohagher Iqbal, MILF chief negotiator, blamed the Army's 6th Infantry Division for the series of assaults.

Iqbal said his counterpart, government chief negotiator Silvestre Afable, informed him that AFP chief of staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon ordered the Army to stand down.

Lt. Col. Julieto Anda, 6th Infantry Division spokesperson, said government forces firepower but didn't drop bombs.

Residents, however, warned the government to prosecute the guerrillas who launched the attacks.

Residents interviewed by Inquirer identified Commander Samal Mangal, Grich and Gardiupo Lantion as the ones responsible for the fighting.

Residents said Lantion, the elected village chair of Bangolan, had fled and joined MILF ranks after he was charged with criminal offense.

On several occasions, Lantion led MILF fighters in harassing his own village, especially during harvest season.

"It's not about land, it's plain and simple banditry," said Midsayap Vice Mayor Manuel Sinsuat.

Local officials have asked the MILF to turn in to local police the three commanders who led the attack on Thursday.

Eid Kabalu, MILF spokesperson, said any guerrilla involved in the attacks would be turned over to the government negotiating panel as provided for by the ceasefire agreement.

Jeoffrey Maitem and Edwin Fernandez, Inquirer Mindanao

Shipping firm faces charges for coral reef destruction

By Remy Rosario
Inquirer Visayas

BUSUANGA CITY—THE CITY government will file a damage suit against a shipping company after one of its vessels ran aground in a marine sanctuary in Barangay Bataliad on Jan. 22.

Vice Mayor William Alibang said the MV Jake Vincent, of Vilar Shipping Lines, ran aground inside the 6.5-hectare marine sanctuary off the coast of Bulanon Beach.

Its ordinance authored by Alibang established the sanctuary in 2003.

The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) said the Jake Vincent came from the Subic Bay freeport, carrying some 21,000 bags of animal feed consigned to Iloilo Bliss Integrated Commercial Inc.

The cargo was to be unloaded at a private port in the neighboring town of Buenig.

A PCG report said the 999 tonnage, vessel owned by Jaby Lighterage Corp. in Bonbon, Navotas, also carried 1,000 sacks of cement when it tried to cow the Jake Vincent away from the area, also on Jan. 22.

Another vessel of Vilar Shipping Lines, the MV Star 1, retrieved the two vessels.

The extent of damage is underestimated since the Silliman University Marine Laboratory (SUML) has yet to complete an investigation.

The SUML would submit its report to the city council.

Because of damage it

TATAD ASKS ERAP -- WHY DO YOU WANT TO DO THIS TO OUR PEOPLE?

15 January 2007

PRESIDENT JOSEPH EJERCITO ESTRADA
Chairman Emeritus
UNITED OPPOSITION

Dear Mr. President:

I write to make of record my position on certain issues related to the May 2007 senatorial elections. My only concern is the honor of our party and well-being of our people.

I shall start by recalling our UNO meeting on Polk Street on New Year's day (morning). Joining the President then were Mayor Jojo Binay, Ernie Maceda, Tito Sotto, Chiz Escudero, Boy Morales, and myself. Fred Lim and Baby Asistio joined later.

The meeting followed no set agenda or structure. Tito Sotto had much to say about his group which he believed should be on the UNO ticket. This included:

1. Tessie Aquino Oreta, who did not seek reelection after her first term ended in 2001;
2. Sonny Osmeña, who ran unsuccessfully on the administration ticket in 2004;
3. Greg Honasan, who is now under detention on charges of rebellion following his highly publicized capture in Quezon City;
4. Loren Legarda, who wants to go back to the Senate at the cost of her vice presidential protest against Noli de Castro; and
5. Tito Sotto himself, who is back on entertainment tv in preparation for the campaign.

It was the first time I heard of this group earnestly wanting to run under the Opposition. Last year, they sent Johnny Rojas to represent them in our UNO meetings. From him we learned that they had been preparing to run, but that they would rather stay "somewhere in the middle," than identify themselves openly with the Opposition. Many of us (notably Jojo Binay) were particularly anxious about that statement. So I listened to Tito with undivided attention.

Tito and Chiz Escudero provided most of the conversation, with Ernie Maceda occasionally interjecting. Mention was made of:

1. Ping Lacson, who has abandoned his earlier decision to run for Mayor of Manila and decided instead to seek reelection;
2. Ed Angara, who was reported to be putting a "unity ticket," but in whose behalf Loren Legarda had reportedly telephoned the President for possible inclusion in the Opposition lineup;
3. Manny Villar and his group, which includes Joker Arroyo, Ralph Recto, and Kiko Pangilinan; and
4. Drilon's Liberal Party, which was reported to be pushing for Noynoy Aquino's inclusion in the UNO slate.

No one opposed Lacson's reentry, but no one pushed for Angara's inclusion. There was not much information about Villar's group -- not even Jojo Binay could say whether or not his friend Joker was running again. The President said he expects to meet shortly with Villar. Upon mention of Noynoy Aquino's name, Tito Sotto promptly cut in to say that between Noynoy and his auntie, Tessie Aquino Oreta, the latter would have better chances of winning. Fred Lim disagreed, saying that if Noynoy ran, his sister Kris Aquino, who is a tv host, would certainly ensure his winning.

I made two short interventions.

1) I proposed that UNO set some criteria or standards before admitting anyone who wants to ride the Opposition bandwagon. Some of these people had joined the President without ceremony to support Mrs. Arroyo in 2001 and 2004; now they want UNO to give them a ride because it seems no longer profitable to be identified with Mrs. Arroyo, although they have not openly abandoned her. They want to collect on every throw of the dice even after they've lost the game. And we seem so eager to provide the revolving door for their crass opportunism. Has it never occurred to us that UNO, rather than Ed Angara whom UNO has excluded from its lineup, could end up putting together the "UNITY TICKET" that combines the best and the worst administration and Opposition personalities?

2) With great pain, I expressed some reservations about drafting Koko Pimentel, Alan Peter Cayetano, and J.V. Ejercito as UNO candidates while Koko's father -- Senate Minority Leader Nene Pimentel, Alan Peter's sister -- Sen. Pia Cayetano, and J.V. Ejercito's half-brother -- Sen. Jinggoy Estrada are sitting in the Senate until 2010. I just could not accept the idea of such bright young men doing what the "trapo to end all trapos" would probably not do, and for the Senate, with all its absurdities, to end up as a inept and shallow "Family Ball." Where Malacañang failed, UNO just might succeed -- we would abolish the Senate's reason for being.

I would have been proud to campaign for these young men if this one impediment did not exist, or if their next of kin gave up their Senate seats right now. But under the circumstances, the Titanic would sink if the three wonders came on board. I would rather encourage J.V. Ejercito to go for a third term as Mayor of San Juan; Koko Pimentel to try his luck a second time in Cagayan de Oro, where he lost his mayoralty bid when his father was Senate President; and Alan Peter to do something exciting in Taguig in the meantime. They have all the time in the world to wait; they can wait; they should wait.

I had to die in that meeting to be able to say the first line of a long sentence. I had already lost too many friends because of politics and I did not want to lose any more than I already have. But the truth needed to be said, and nobody else seemed willing to say it. I had to take the risk. The ancients said it so well: *Amicus Plato, amicus Socrates, sed magis amica veritas* -- "Plato is dear to me, Socrates is dear, but the truth is dearer still."

This was not a question of the Constitution or the law, but simply of ethics -- of what is right and proper. Article II, Sec. 26 of the 1987 Constitution says, *"The State shall guarantee equal access to opportunities for public service, and prohibit political dynasties as may be defined by law."* No enabling law has been enacted, but we have a serious moral duty to live by the spirit of the Constitution, and not to make the problem of dynasties any more messy than it already is.

Political dynasties are either appreciated or hated, tolerated or feared. But even in the worst of cases, dynastic family members try simultaneously to occupy as many different offices as possible, or else they alternate or rotate in holding on to a particular office that allows them to exercise power. Never do they sit together in the same office at the same time. This is precisely what the three young men's senatorial bid threatens to alter.

The obvious assumption is that the voters are so pissed off with GMA that they will eat any kind of dung we give them. This is false. We cannot have such a very poor opinion of our people. In the end, they will prove us wrong, whatever the paid pollsters tell us. But should error and madness prevail, three families would be holding six Senate seats -- one fourth of the Senate -- after May 2007. Thereafter, twelve or eight or six families could end up controlling all 24 seats. Husbands and wives, together with their sons and daughters, and uncles and aunties, why not, could end up running as one big gang.

You, Mr. President, and we, your friends in UNO, have a special responsibility to make sure this does not even begin to happen. The Senate is a small body of 24 members, representing a nation of 80 million Filipinos or about 18 million families. *No single family* has a vested right to be represented there. Membership in the Senate is a privilege conferred by the people. It is a gift from them, except when cheats manage to rig the electoral process. No two senators from a single nuclear family had ever sat there until Jinggoy was elected in 2004, after his mother Sen. Loi Estrada had been elected in 2001. But this was the result of an extraordinary situation, an exception which proves the rule.

We all know how and why it happened. In 2001, the President was removed in a coup after his impeachment trial was cut short by a walkout of the prosecutors. His wanted to show -- and the Opposition and the voters agreed with him then -- that despite his removal he continued to enjoy popular support which the people were willing to translate into Senate seats for his wife Loi and his son Jinggoy. That, however, was to be a one-shot deal only, not to be used as a precedent or model.

Now that Senator Loi has decided, in your words, "to retire" and become your "caregiver," that exceptional situation would cease to exist, and what many believe was truly an error would be finally cured. But were the President to inflict his other son J. V. Ejercito on the UNO ticket, then he would be perpetuating the error, and encouraging others to follow his example, as seems to be happening now to the two otherwise bright young men -- Alan Peter Cayetano and Koko Pimentel.

Not only would the President be perpetuating an error, he would also be confirming the suspicion of those who reject any possibility of his assuming any leadership role in the post-Arroyo scenario before or after 2010 – that his idea of the national interest is seriously impaired by his devotion to the personal. This is totally unnecessary and unfair.

We at UNO cannot possibly support this error without in effect telling the masses, whose champions we say we are, that, contrary to what we have been saying to them, and what we have led them to believe, our primary interest has never been to serve them but only to serve ourselves. We would thereby be throwing away our moral advantage, and making our party the most effective campaigners for the administration.

I have no doubt that if the administration tried to do what the leader of UNO wants to do now, we would be the first ones to shout to the high heavens in outrage and anger. Why then should we ever want to do it ourselves? Our people expect us to do better, and we have so assured them. Have we been lying to them all this time that we have been saying that Mrs. Arroyo is the liar? If we are no better than the ones we denounce, what right have we to be here at all? To whom will our people turn if they see that the administration and the Opposition have cancelled each other out? Would this not be the cruelest betrayal?

In the meeting, I waited to hear someone say I was wrong. I waited to be told that the reason or reasons for drafting the three next of kin of sitting senators were far beyond my ability to grasp in one short lifetime. But there was no effort to shoot down or refute my objection. No effort to explain why UNO has to have all the star fruits and the three wonders on its dream ticket. You will, therefore, understand why when you and Ernie Maceda agreed to release to the media the names of the three wonders as part of your proposed ticket, while my objection was waiting to be addressed, I felt that my long service to the Opposition and my presence in that meeting had just been annulled. That was the worst possible slap I had ever received – and from my party colleagues yet. For that reason, I decided that any future participation in any UNO activity on my part would be completely superfluous.

The real issue here is our moral integrity as the presumed alternative to the Arroyo government. I have fought for this, a little more than many of those you see in the street marches. After the 2001 coup, many simply decided to cross over to the administration. Many others decided to watch and see, to bury their heads in the sand, or to negotiate the terms of mutually beneficial coexistence. I decided to keep on clarifying the issues for myself, the Opposition, and the nation. Many of those now groveling before you used to laugh at the very line which they now superficially spout for your pleasure. There were times when all I could hear was my lone solitary voice – and that of Professor Alex Pagulo, whose right to practice and teach law has since been cancelled – madly questioning President Arroyo's legitimacy after almost everyone else had caved in.

But I refused to back down. With the help of a few brave souls on the *Citizens vs. Corruption Task Force*, I continued to expose major scams in the government, including the P130-billion customs bonds scam, the P100-million DOTC airport land scam, the $2-million BSP fund diversion in Hong Kong, the misuse of GWA funds, and the P728-million Agricultural Modernization Fund scam, now known as the Jocjoc Bolante affair, which became cause celebre at the Senate in 2006, two years after I had exposed it at the start of the 2004 campaign.

That entailed a heavy price, and I paid it in full. In the 2004 elections, which I thought was the best of my senatorial campaign, I was singled out for demolition. This was known to PMP and to KNP, whose members had read or heard about Oplan Checkmate, which detailed the plot against our presidential ticket and me, and which had surfaced at the start of the campaign. As always, you did what you could to help, but if there was any party or coalition effort to save my candidacy from the Oplan, it never caught my attention.

On the campaign trail, radio-tv coverage suddenly vanished as soon as it was my turn to speak. My campaign posters everywhere were brought down by the wrecking crew in less than 24 hours. On election day, my name disappeared from the 12-man KNP senatorial slate on the Comelec official list of candidates posted in every voting booth to guide voters, and appeared separately as the lone PMP senatorial candidate at the bottom of the printed form.

At the counting, my votes mysteriously shrank by something like 80% as they traveled from the barangay precinct to the national canvassing center. In contrast, the votes of one losing candidate were padded by at least 200% to make the recipient one of the top senatorial winners. Ultimately, my recorded "historic vote" – a term known to seasoned political players and analysts – which in two successful senatorial elections had risen to close to 11 million by 1995 was savaged to nearly half that number.

Today, I am defendant in a criminal libel case filed by the First Gentleman in a Manila court arising from a 2004 post-election newspaper article which attributes to me certain statements that are not even slightly libelous. My name had been dropped from the complaint in 2004 but was reinstated in 2006, upon motion of the complainant – after the supposed crime had legally prescribed.

All this is par for the course. None of it should have been mentioned here were I not obliged to show that I have earned the right to be heard on the basic morality of our cause.

Before I left Polk street, you came over to say you would like to have me included in your senatorial slate. I begged off. "Please don't, Mr. President," I said. You tried to insist, but I pleaded, "please, Mr. President." You did not say so, but you seemed to be under the impression that I was objecting to certain candidacies because I wanted to be a candidate myself. That was not the point at all. It was a total misimpression. We should know each other well enough by now for you to know if there was anything I have ever done or would ever do just for my own self-interest.

My one consuming desire is to see the country return to a state of normalcy where all can live a morally upright life, and one does not have to be part of a power structure to get the respect he deserves. Where law and justice are one and truth presides, where deserving individuals are elected to high office because the office needs them, and not because they need the office. For this reason, I wanted to see electoral reforms before the parade of celebrities and popular incompetents begins. Thus, I was for boycotting the elections if no electoral reforms were put in place. However, that position was quickly vaporized after a swarm of ambitious innocents, whose idea of national politics consists purely of packing public office with synthetic personalities, started hyping the Opposition's alleged ability to give Mrs. Arroyo the same "thumping" the Democrats gave the Republicans in the last U.S. elections. This was capped by the President's premature announcement of his dream ticket.

This, I thought, was a serious mistake, as did a number of respected foreign analysts. Under these circumstances, I could not bring myself to consider running again, even though I honestly believe I had the right and duty to regain the Senate seat which was fraudulently taken away from me in 2004. So when you asked me why I would not want to join your ticket, I said: first, because I wasn't sure elections would be held – (to date, there is still no budget); second, because I wasn't sure the elections would be honest, assuming they were held – we have not insisted on electoral reforms and no reforms have been put in place; third, because I did not believe I could be part of a ticket whose other candidates I could not even endorse to the public. There were two other reasons: I could not allow it to interrupt the joys of grand parenting, and I need to honor some publishing commitments, which could no longer be delayed.

This, for me then, is a new turning point. I began my political career in 1968, when I was appointed to the Cabinet at 29, the youngest such appointee in our history. Through the years, I have fought many fights, many of them lost causes. I have not learned to exchange principle for personal pleasure or profit, and I have always paid the price. This allows me to stand on my own, with no fear of powers or personalities, of the dark or of the light, to snore quietly in my sleep every night in the hope of waking up in the morning to a loving and merciful God, to speak up whenever truth demands a witness, and something that needs to be said in speech and in silence is not being said.

I would be untrue to myself if I said that what the leaders of UNO propose to do with their "UNITY TICKET" is right. It is inept, certainly not, and I will not dishonor our friendship by keeping silent or pretending that it is right, or of little or no consequence. I want to thank you for your friendship and for the many personal kindnesses you have extended to me and to my wife, in the course of that friendship. We shall remain friends for as long as we both put ourselves and our personal interests in the service of truth, justice, and the common good.

May the good Lord guide you always.

Sincerely yours,

FRANCISCO S. TATAD

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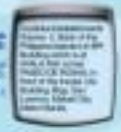

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'Evidence against shabu mart owner strong'

Justice chief's statements disheartening, police say

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr. and Leila B. Salaverria

THE POLICE OFFICIAL HEADING THE PRIMARY witness against the alleged owner of the compound of shabu restaurants unearthed in Pasig City last year expressed disappointment yesterday over statements made by Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez about the case.

Pasig police chief, Senior Supt. Francisco Tiyami, told the Inquirer, "It is very disheartening."

In a report which came out Monday in the Inquirer, Gonzalez said evidence against alleged shabu manufacturer Amin Imam Boratong was weak and that police witness Jaime Shim was not credible. His comments were contained in three memoranda he issued to public prosecutors handling the case.

"The case has been submitted by the court because we have sufficient evidence. The case is strong. It is unfortunate (if he said that)," Tiyami added.

The Inquirer called up public prosecutors handling the case to get their reaction but none of them said no a new message. "We will not give any interview, sorry."

The antivice group Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption, meanwhile, said it would present an alleged victim of Boratong to testify next this week.

"We hope Secretary Gonzalez will listen to the version of Boratong first before issuing statements that may influence the investigation of the complaint," VACC founding chairman Jimmy Jimenez said in a text message to the Inquirer.

Boratong's lawyer, Raymund Fortun, refused to comment on whether or not Gonzalez's statements were favorable to his client.

"I will not draw any conclusion from what he has stated so far. It is his assumptions," Fortun, who was in Baguio City, told the Inquirer over the phone.

Gonzalez, meanwhile, defended his statements and said that not only was the physical evidence against Boratong weak, Palao was also a "polluted source," who could be working with the police to extort money from the suspect.

The justice secretary, who can decide on the police's motion for using Palao against Boratong, called for an independent probe/body to investigate Palao, the police and even himself.

Gonzalez said the independent body could be similar to the Melo Commission or may be composed of panel operatives from the Bureau of Investigation and the Philippine National Police.

"You know these things should be investigated completely by an independent body other than the NBI. Maybe the PNP and NBI can investigate jointly Palao and the police involved. What are the stakes of each one? Why are the police interested in Palao, for example?" he told reporters.

"Siguro isa sila sa di-ely-ini kung sino-sino dito nakinabangan. (They should include me there if they want to investigate me)," he added.

EVIDENCE ON

DELIGHTFUL TO LOOK AT BUT ... Birds go on sale at a public market in Manila even as health officials recently cautioned the public to be on the alert following the resurgence of the bird flu virus in Asia.

HOW TO SET UP AND MANAGE AN NGO OR FOUNDATION SEMINAR, FEB. 7, 2007. Topics: Getting Organized; Complete Project Cycle; Sourcing of Funding; Best practices and Techniques; & Sustainability. Venue: Richville Hotel, 286 EDSA, Mandaluyong City, 1-5 PM. To register, please call Trillium Knowledge Center Publishing at 478-8623, 531-8884, CP: 0919-229-6777; 0919-229-8780; 0915-788-4375 or email: trillium@pldtdsl.net or ttcc_ph@yahoo.com. Limited seats only. Register Now!

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TOYOTA
moving forward

QC Police District, SWAT team win top honors

By Julie M. Aurelio

THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION Police Office yesterday declared the Quezon City Police District the best police district in the metropolis for 2000.

In second place was the Manila Police District, followed by the Northern Police District covering the Caloocan (Caloocan, Malabon, Navotas and Valenzuela) area.

Double honor

Aside from winning the top award, the QCPD's Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team was also adjudged the best among the other NRDC teams in Metro Manila.

The recipients of the various awards were announced by the NCRPO in preparation for its celebration of the 36th anniversary of the Philippine National Police next month.

Also cited were the Valenzuela Police Station for best police station, MPD's Station 11 for best reinforced police station and the Makati police's women and children's concerns desk for best women's desk.

Outstanding policewoman

Other awardees were Senior Supt. Federico Lacson Jr. (senior police commissioned officer for administration category), Supt. Solomon Mirangaot (senior police commissioned officer for operations category), Insp. Freyre Bernal (junior police commissioned officer category), PO3 Francisco Mendoza (junior police noncommissioned officers category), Supt. Lilian Castillo (police woman of the year) and Judy Clemente (noncommissioned personnel of the year).

Cooperating agencies

The NCRPO awards committee likewise cited as individual and several congressional organizations for supporting its peace and order programs.

Among the recipients were the Valenzuela Business Club, Bread of Life Ministries, PNP Civilians Affairs Inc. Makati chapter, the Department of Public Works and Highways, Kapatiran IV (narcotics and Drivers' Association in Pasig and George Lee, president of the Chinese-Filipino Business Outlets).

Awarding ceremony

The winners will be recognized on Thursday, Feb. 1, 8 a.m. on the NCRPO grounds in Camp Bagong Diwa, Bicutan, Taguig City.

In 2000, the Southern Police District was chosen the best police district in the National Capital Region. It was also the winner in 2004.

FALLEN BUT STILL DEFIANT

Members of the militant group, Youth for Nationalism and Democracy, continue to struggle even after their arrest by policemen following a rally in front of Malacañang Palace. The group was protesting the antiterrorism bill.

Suspect confesses to raping 8-year-old

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

SUFFERING IF HIS CONSCIENCE, a 19-year-old suspect admitted that he also raped the 8-year-old girl whose body was found in Barangay Bihi, days after her mother reported her missing.

Police said that Elvin Gonzales made the confession as he also named his mother, Evelyn Amatan, 41, as the mastermind.

"He told us that his conscience bothered him," Pasig City police investigation chief Senior Insp. Lorenzo Tenjaco told the lensmen yesterday.

Tenjaco, however, said they would need for the report of the forensic of the Crime Laboratory to determine if the girl, Marites Lebendonoz, was indeed raped.

Pasig police chief, Senior Supt. Francisco Uysiat, had earlier said that an autopsy done concerning no 100,000 could have triggered the crime.

Amatan admitted that the girl's mother, Melene, had borrowed P10,000 from her and had not paid her back.

Amatan, however, denied that she and the other suspects had raped and killed the girl to get back at Melene.

Gonzales, Amatan and her brother-in-law, Antolago Nicanorez, were arrested on Jan. 22 for their alleged involvement in the kidnapping of Marites who was reported missing on Jan. 21.

A witness had earlier told the police that she saw the three suspects with the girl a few hours before she disappeared.

Amatan's live-in partner, Elle Gonzales, was also arrested but the police released him for lack of evidence.

On Jan. 25, the girl's naked body was found in a canal in Barangay Bolinao, Taytay, the next day.

The Rizal provincial police have arrested another suspect in Taytay, Rizal although Elle Gonzales remains at large, Tenjaco added.

Police have already filed kidnapping with homicide charges against the suspects.

Tenjaco said they would wait for the Tesic report to know if they should include rape in the charges.

Tulfo brothers post P10,000 bail bond

By DJ Yap

JOURNALIST RAMON TULFO and his brother, Raffy, yesterday posted bail of P10,000 each in connection with the multimillion libel suit filed against them by the President's husband, Jose Miguel Arroyo.

Another convicted, their younger brother, Erwin, posted bail two days earlier after a Quezon City prosecutor found probable cause to charge the Tulfos in court.

The brothers' arraignment was set on Feb. 28, in which they are expected to enter a plea to charges of libel they outlined in two articles in Que's column. The articles were back to back front-page stories on Aug. 2.

Arroyo had said the brothers made libelous statements during their press conference, in which they accused him of having a hand in the cancellation of the TV show, "Bombong Mo (Subi-Subi) Ako," on government station IBC-13.

The President's husband also cited bail over the brothers' claim that he had been angered by Ramon's allegations that he was a protector of the smuggling activities of his rumored stalemate, Reby Sy.

In their counter-affidavits, the Tulfos denied that the statements they had made during the press conference constituted libel.

The remarks I made during the press conference constitute fair to grave, commentaries and/or opinions on a matter of public interest and/or concern, namely, the interference of a powerful and influential individual in a government-controlled television station in an effort to silence my constitutional freedoms of expression," Ramon said.

"I attest, my remarks are privileged in nature and constitutionally protected," he added.

Ramon also said there was no libel in the case because Arroyo was never directly identified. "It was merely a matter of ... simply a 'do ing,'" Tulfo added.

In his affidavit, Erwin said his participation in the press conference was part of his journalistic duty to "inform the public of the attempts of those in power to muzzle the press."

Midwife loses valuables to thief

By Julie M. Aurelio

IT WAS NOT THE ROBBER(S) she expected.

Aminah Macabando, a midwife, came home from an out-of-town trip on Tuesday night only to find out that her house had been burglarized.

She lost more than P500,000 in cash and jewelry to the robber, who, according to her neighbors, was a man who went inside her house several times.

Macabando had just returned from a three-day vacation in Baguio City at 11 p.m. Tuesday. But when she got to her apartment at 179 Valeria Street, Catchaban Subdivision in Barangay 3, Las Piñas, she found out that the door to her kitchen had been forced open.

Inside the master's bedroom, the lock of the drawer to which she kept her valuables had also been destroyed.

Missing were P80,000 in cash and P450,000 worth of jewelry which included bracelets, rings, earrings and necklaces.

Her neighbors told Macabando that they saw a man walking near her apartment on Thursday night.

"My neighbors told me that the (male) suspect even went back to my place several times after he broke in," the 37-year-old said with tears.

"It seems that the thief really knew where to go and what to look for," she added.

However, Macabando said she has no idea who the thief could be.

$5-M reward should go to the Marine Corps

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

TO LIKE TO THANK MY FRIENDS who visited me their condolences to my colleagues on Saturday about the vision I had in India during my 10-day spiritual sojourn there.

One of them was fellow columnist James Jimenez. He said that God does not curse His creatures, even "when He was mad at me."

Jaime, I wasn't referring to God when I mentioned that I wanted a "curse I may have that led to my present predicament." I was referring to the gods in the country.

One of those gods is Oscar Calderon, Philippine National Police chief. He thinks that I should kneel down before him in order for me to get a permit to carry my licensed gun.

As you well know, Jaime, I need to carry a gun for my protection because of threats to my life.

Calderon hasn't given me a reason for his refusal to give me a permit when all his predecessors did so.

I have to invoke this since I'm not in the habit of naming names, but the PNP should give me a permit to carry a gun if only out of a sense of gratitude.

Early last year, the police antinarcotics task force raided a drug den in Quezon City and arrested Ong Bun Lee, a Chinese drug lord.

Lee's arrest led to the discovery of a big shipment of shabu, followed by the victims' purpose and other items. The task force also found a number of high-powered firearms, immediately escaped after the incident.

Ong Bun Lee, who apparently knew that the shabu had contained cash, followed

Arab Muslim to join Israel Cabinet for 1st time

JERUSALEM—THE ISRAELI government voted Sunday to appoint an Arab Muslim to the Cabinet for the first time in the history of the Jewish state, despite opposition from ultranationalists and some Arab lawmakers.

Eluahi Mujadleh, 53, from the moderate Labor party, becomes minister without portfolio in the transitional government of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert.

Mujadleh, a long-time union leader, hailed his appointment as a historic step forward for relations between Jews and the minority Arab community in Israel.

"It is the appointment of the first Israeli minister to a seat in the Arab citizens of Israel to push the Arabs toward social and political equality," he told AFP.

All cabinet members except for Olmert's coalition Minister of Strategic Affairs, neighbor Lieberman, voted in favor of his appointment, according to a senior government source.

In 2001, Salah Tarif, a member of the Druze minority, was made minister without portfolio but he resigned shortly afterwards after being indicted on corruption charges. He was convicted in December 2002.

Mujadleh and sources close to Olmert said the two had agreed that Mujadleh would be assigned a portfolio within weeks, possibly at the helm of a newly created ministry of science, culture and sport.

Government ministers also praised Mujadleh's appointment as seen as a step by Labor to counter Lieberman's ultranationalist stance against Israel's 1.3 million Arabs, who make up about 20 percent of Israel's population.

"The time has come for an Arab minister in our Cabinet. I hail the decision," Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres told AFP.

Immigration Minister Zeev Boim said Mujadleh's appointment was "a day of celebration for the state of Israel and especially for the Arab minority."

Lieberman has been accused of racism over his calls for the enforced transfer of Israeli Arabs and the land where the minority is concentrated in northern Israel to the West Bank.

Several Arab lawmakers, however, denounced the appointment of Mujadleh, who replaces former cabinet minister Qedar Nasr Eldin Peres-Yeshua resigned in October in protest at Lieberman joining the government.

"It's not logical for an Arab minister to take the place of a Jewish minister who left the cabinet and resigned in protest against racism," Arab lawmaker Mohammed Barakeh from the Communist Hadash Party told AFP.

"Mujadleh is not an Arab minister, he is a Labor minister...and he will sign his name to all decisions and policies against the Arabs."

Labor leader Amir Peretz, facing an uphill battle to remain leader of the party, had pushed for the appointment of Mujadleh, which many see as a bid to shore up the support of Arab members ahead of a party leadership vote in May.

Mujadleh is a long time union leader from Baka Al-Gharbiya, an Arab village along Israel's border with the occupied West Bank. The father of four was elected in parliament for the first time in 2000.

Israeli Arabs are descendants of those 160,000 or so Palestinians who stayed behind when the Jewish state was declared in 1948 and did not join the exodus of refugees to neighboring Arab countries.

Arab-led parties account for 10 of the seats in the 120-member parliament, but Israeli Arabs do not serve in the military.

In July 2000, the Supreme Court recognized that Israeli Arabs faced discrimination particularly in employment and in September 2003 a state commission criticized the government of not a two-and-a-half-year inquiry of not doing enough to put a stop to the problem.

AFP

AVICII climber ascends a frozen waterfall Jan. 28, at the Palisades of the Delaware, in Bloomsville, Pa. AP

Speed of climate change a 'major risk'

COMPIEGNE, FRANCE—THERE IS no longer any doubt about the reality of global warming and the speed at which it is developing is a "major risk," a senior expert says.

"Is the climate changing? Not the past few years there is no longer any doubt about it," said Herve le Treut, one of the world's top climate scientists who expert in Paris on Monday.

"Is the climate changing due to human activity, the response is more and more certainly yes," Le Treut, the director of the dynamic meteorology laboratory at the Pierre-Simon Laplace institute in eastern France, told AFP in an interview.

On Friday the hundreds of experts at the Paris meeting of the Intergovernmental Experts Group on Climate Change (GIEC) will issue the first update in six years of the scientific evidence for global warming.

It is expected to be the bleakest assessment yet about global warming and its effects on climate.

"The major risk is that of the speed of climate change," he said, pointing to the increased ratio posed by the changing nature of society.

"If we were in a very stable world it would not be so bad if it were a bit hotter or a bit colder.

But the risk is of a very quick transition that we can have from one world to another, because it is very destabilizing in every level, including social, and politically," he said.

He said scientists were becoming more confident in their evaluations as events had backed up previous predictions.

"Every period that passes strengthens the previous conclusions," he said.

"Science is developing in the direction of confirming the first simulations. For the past 20 years the level of confidence that we can have in what it said and the ways in which things are backed up from the scientific point of view is enormous," he said.

AFP

Saudi invites Palestinian foes to talks in Mecca

JERUSALEM—KING ABDULLAH OF SAUDI Arabia called on Sunday on the rival Palestinian factions to hold emergency talks in the holy city of Mecca in the latest bid to halt some of the worst ever Palestinian internal fighting.

As the two main factions, Hamas and Fatah, waged a fourth straight day of fighting in the Gaza Strip, leaders from both groups said they would take up the invitation by the Saudi monarch, though no date was set.

"I call on my brothers, the Palestinian people, represented by their leaders, to put an immediate end to this tragedy and to abide by righteousness," the king said in an announcement carried by the official Saudi Press Agency.

Saudi Arabia does not have a tradition of such direct involvement in Palestinian affairs. But as one of the most important figures in the Arab world, the king, by his decision to hold the talks in Mecca, could increase the pressure on the Palestinian leaders to find a compromise.

However, efforts by other Arab states have failed to stop the bloodshed. Egypt has been acting in a go-between for months, and earlier this month, Syria organized talks between Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian president and leader of the Fatah faction, and Khaled Meshal, the political leader in exile of the Islamic militant faction Hamas. But no breakthrough was produced.

The feud between the factions has grown increasingly bitter since Hamas, the radical Islamic group, won parliamentary elections a year ago, unseating Fatah, the dominant Palestinian political movement for decades. Hamas controls the Cabinet and the Legislature, but its government has a limited presence, and many members of the security forces remain loyal to Fatah.

YIT

MISSING BEAUTY

Beauty queen Taisa Thoresen is an Agarid, 1981, photo during that year's Miss Brazil contest. Thoresen, who won the 2002 Miss Brazil crown, has been reported missing since Thursday. Police said they would start investigations at the request of her family.

AP

Mexico City's smog clears...a little

By Frank Jack Daniel

MEXICO CITY—HEAVY TRUCKS belch black smoke and lines of buses battle through a virtually gridlocked sea of cars inching beneath a haze of caboose fumes.

Pollution in Mexico City in 2007. With car ownership more than doubling over the last decade, the megalopolis once dubbed the world's most polluted city should by now be almost unbreathable. Its residents gasping through oxygen masks.

But air doesn't exactly smell sweet. Past look up beyond the tops of office buildings those days and the sky is blue.

Over the past decade Mexico City has left its worst of the worst polluting cars and bounced back from the dark days of the 1980s and 1990s, when children paint-ed the sky as black or brown and opaque air sent choking brits plummeting in the ground.

Now, for a couple of days most months, the snow-capped volcanoes that serve as a dramatic backdrop to the city are visible—after decades of being blotted by yellow-smog.

"Things have changed," said José Luis Perez, 78, who has spent 50 years selling newspapers in the ever-more congested city center. "With the new cars and regulations, Mexicans don't pollute like they used to." Air pollution earned Mexico City a place on a list of the world's 10 most polluted places last year, but it escaped the top 10. (For the Blacksmith's business's cup of joe: "Sin-dos-Pacific 10 most polluted places.")

Nobel prize-winning Mexican chemist Mario Molina points out that the city's ozone levels are still higher than Los Angeles and Houston, the smoggiest US cities.

But gone are the regular smog emergencies of the 1990s when cars were temporarily banned from downtown and children kept inside until the air cleared.

"Pollution is much better than in the 1990s and much better than Los Angeles in the 1960s. Then you were choking, your eyes would get watery and you could smell it," said Molina.

Tight emissions rules and better fuel have helped, scientists say, but perhaps the biggest change came through a credit boom during the 6-year term of former President Vicente Fox, who left office in December.

With unprecedented access to cheaper cash, Mexico City residents traded rust and benger new cars with fuel injection systems and catalytic converters, which cuts up to 20 times less pollutants than older models.

Around four million cars are known to circulate in central Mexico City up from about 3.5 million in 1996, according to industry statistics.

"Even though there are more vehicles circulating, the percentage of old, rundown cars has gradually dropped," said José Agustin Arrieta, a professor researcher at Mexico's Hanna autonomy.

But Garcia, who still develops a hacking cough in the months he takes to the streets to do field work, warns that with larger gas guzzling models helping fog the city, the positive impact of cleaner motors could be outweighed.

"Our studies say things are going to get worse in the future," he said. "The trend toward fat cars used to take kids to school is threatens the benefit of catalytic converters."

Both Molina and Garcia say more needs to be spent on public transport—the metro is efficient but does not reach new areas of the sprawling city and the buses are chaotic.

One area worrying the scientists is the level of fine particulate matter in the air—suspended particles of solids like dirt, soil, dust, pollens, molds, ashes and soot.

Diesel smoke from old trucks, still undersegulated in Mexico, is one of the main sources of particulates, which can cause chronic bronchitis and asthma.

Molina wants more particulates, but not the finest ones, which Finnish Health Organization studies say can enter the blood-stream and cause heart problems.

A recent Mexican study said unregulated fine particle levels in Mexico City are considered to be ranges considered acceptable in Los Angeles.

Reuters

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The WORLD

Edna Lorenzo B. Guzon

US, Iraqi forces kill 300 Iraq militants

NAJAF, IRAQ—US AND IRAQI FORCES KILLED some 300 gunmen from an apocalyptic Muslim cult in a day-long battle involving US tanks and aircraft near the Shiite holy city of Najaf, Iraqi police, army and political sources said.

The US military said on Monday it was an ongoing operation so it could not provide any details.

An Iraqi army source said US forces took control of the operation on Sunday and bombing continued in the area until well after dawn on Monday, which was the climax of Ashura, the high point of the Shiite religious calendar.

Two Americans were killed, the US military said on Sunday, when an attack helicopter went down during the battle that saw one of the strongest incidents of the 4-year conflict. Iraqi officials said the helicopter seemed to have been shot down.

Police Colonel Ali Nomas said 208 to 300 gunmen had been killed in the operation and dozens more arrested. Three Iraqi soldiers were killed and six more missing, and five policemen were killed, sources said. Forty Iraqi police and soldiers were wounded.

According to one Iraqi political source, hundreds of fighters, drawn from both Sunni and Shiite communities, fought throughout Sunday and late into the night.

A US news reporter in the scene, Hit Inn south of Baghdad, saw US tanks and Israeli Merkava tanks on Sunday and an Iraqi officer said 1-16 Jets were bombing the area.

Details of the day's fighting were sketchy and the origins of the fighters unclear. An Iraqi army source said some of the dead were headbands declaring themselves a "Soldier of Heaven."

The political source said up to 1,000 fighters had been involved. An Iraqi army source said they were extremely well organized and appeared well-organized.

The US military officially handed over responsibility for Najaf province to Iraqi security forces last month, withdrawing some 120 troops, to be redeployed only to help in emergencies.

Najaf Gov. Asaad Abu Gilal said Monday the authorities had uncovered a plot to kill leading Shiite clerics in Najaf on Monday to coincide with the climax of Ashura, the annual Shiite rite marking a seventh-century battle which cemented the schism between Shiite and Sunni Islam.

"There is a conspiracy to kill the clergy on the 10th day of Muharram," he said, referring to Monday by the Muslim calendar.

Initially on Sunday the Najaf governor described the fighters as Sunnis, the majority in the Arab world and the once dominant minority in Iraq, whose Shiites have been in the ascendant since the US invasion of 2003.

The two sects are embroiled in conflict in Iraq that many fear is descending into all-out civil war.

But political and security sources said they were followers of Ahmed Hassani al-Yemeni and Ahmad Basri, him an an apocalyptic cult leader claiming to be the vanguard of the Mahdi—a messiah-like figure in Islam whose coming heralds the start of perfect world justice. He had been operating from an office in Najaf until it was ousted and closed down earlier this month.

Similar violent cults have been a feature of Islamic history. They have declared temporal Muslim leaders illegitimate rulers and have drawn followers from both Sunnis and Shiite believers, proclaiming a unity of inspiration from Muhammad.

Among other violent instances associated with proclamations of the coming of the Mahdi were opposition to British rule in Sudan in the 1880s and the siege of the Grand Mosque in Mecca in 1979, when hundreds of new-recruited Islam's holiest site.

Up to 1.5 million pilgrims gathered in Karbala, 75 kilometers north of Najaf, to mark Ashura—the death in battle of Muhammad's grandson in 680, which confirmed the split in Islam between rival claimants to the Prophet's inheritance. Reuters

PILGRIMS pray inside the holy shrine of Imam Hussein during Muharram, an important period of mourning for Shiites in Karbala, Iraq, Jan. 20. AP

Karzai offers talks with Taliban

KABUL—AFGHAN PRESIDENT Hamid Karzai on Monday offered peace talks with a resurgent Taliban after the bloodiest year since the hardline Islamists were ousted in 2001 and amid warnings of a violent spring offensive.

More than 4,000 people, including about 170 foreign soldiers, died in fighting last year, a year that saw a dramatic jump in suicide bombings as the Taliban and other militants copy tactics from insurgents in Iraq.

Karzai made the offer while speaking at a religious gathering to forbid—in one of the holiest days of the Shia Islamic calendar, but he did not specifically name the Taliban.

Karzai also said he prayed for the "gardeners" of those who plotted against Afghanistan, referring to neighboring Pakistan where the Taliban and their Islamic allies have sanctuaries.

Karzai few years ago offered amnesty to those Taliban he said others regard as moderate, but on Monday made no such distinction.

The Taliban have vowed to drive out foreign troops and overthrow Karzai and his government. Reuters

Irrepressible ministers give Japan PM headaches

TOKYO—FIRST, HIS DEFENSE minister risks offending Japan's key ally the United States, by calling the start of the Iraq war a "mistake."

Then, his health minister sparks a domestic furor by calling women "birth-giving machines."

Gaffes by Cabinet ministers are giving Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe a political headache when his support ratings are already slipping due to doubts about his leadership ability—hardly showing ahead of an upper house election in July.

"I want to make clear that our Cabinet is not allowing people to say one after they resign," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuhisa Shiozaki told a news conference on Monday at which he was bombarded with questions about the statements by the two ministers.

She came under fire when he took office in September for vowing a "clean Cabinet" of true-makers who had supported his bid to become prime minister. Now, some critics say his choices are coming back to haunt him.

"These people are not media savvy. They are feudal warlords who waste their hard opinions," said Jesper Koll, chief economist at Merrill Lynch in Tokyo. "He put them in the Cabinet... and now he's stuck with them."

She told parliament he had given a strong warning to Health Minister Hakuo Yanagisawa about his "inappropriate" phrase, and Yanagisawa himself apologized for "hurting women's feelings."

Yanagisawa, 71, had been speaking to local lawmakers about Japan's sub-bottom birth rate, which has raised concerns about economic growth and the ability to fund ballooning pension costs.

"Because the number of birth-giving machines and devices is fixed, all we can ask for is for them to do their best per head, although it may not be so appropriate to call them machines," Kyodo quoted Yanagisawa as saying.

Shiozaki now also called about the latest controversial remarks by Defense Minister Fumio Kyuma, who last week told US President George W. Bush had been wrong to start the Iraq war on the assumption that Baghdad had nuclear weapons.

Kyuma was quoted as saying on Saturday that Washington didn't understand the need for "quagmire" to win approval from the governor of Okinawa to relocate a US military base on the southern island, as stated in line with a US-Japan agreement.

"I am telling the US didn't not to say such patronizing things, that I am talking to the governor, so please wait a bit and leave Japanese matters to Japan," Kyuma was quoted as saying.

Shiozaki acknowledged that US officials had contacted Japanese authorities to check on Kyuma's comments about the Iraq war, but added there had not been any criticism. Reuters

JAPANESE Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (right) chats with Defense Minister Fumio Kyuma Jan. 29. AP

Drinking recycled sewage

SYDNEY—AUSTRALIAN PRIME minister on Monday hailed a move to have the citizens of a drought-parched region to drink recycled sewage as the way forward for the rest of the world's thirsty industrialized continent.

John Howard praised Queensland Premier Peter Beattie, who on Sunday announced that residents in the state's timber-dry southeast would be drinking recycled water from the start of next year, whether they liked it or not.

Beattie said recent low inflows to dams had left his government with no alternative but to dump plans for a public referendum on the issue intended for March.

"The reality is at the moment we have no choice, we have to provide people with water," he said.

"It's not like we are part of a broad show—the rest of the world is doing this," he said, referring to residents in Singapore, London, Washington and southern California, where he said drink recycled water.

Much of Australia is suffering the worst drought in a century. AFP

WHAT'S INSIDE

- Suns stretch NBA win streak to 17 /A26

SPORTS

Editor Teddyboy S. Pilapandoy

- Woods spells relevance of 7th straight triumph /A26

SBP hopes to get Fiba nod in March

By Jove Mariano

HINGAS

THE SAMAHANG BASKETBOL ng Pilipinas hopes to officially secure accreditation from the International Basketball Federation when Fiba holds its central board meeting on March 2 in Thailand.

PBA chair Eldy Ongpin, one of the prime movers of the SBP, said the new cage body is ready to start the national team after the election of officers during the Unity Congress set on Feb. 11 at the Crown Hotel in Makati City.

The two requirements would complete the terms of the Fiba-endorsed communique signed last year in Tokyo by representatives of the Amateur Basketball Association of the Philippines and Philippine Basketball to unite the sport under a new cage body.

But whether the unification process would proceed smoothly hinges on a crucial meeting last night by the new leadership of the BAP to decide whether it would attend the Unity Congress.

Mitos BAP president Jio Teng Hok, who presided over the meeting which was going at presstime, said any decision would be announced today.

Ongpin said SBP wants to start the formation of the national team immediately after the Unity Congress to complete the requirements of the sanctioning. Its first for a key Fiba meeting in Thailand.

SBP officials, led by runners Manny V. Pangilinan, PBA commissioner Noli Eala and Ongpin, plan to ask national coach Chot Reyes to present his program for the national team made up of PBA stars any time soon.

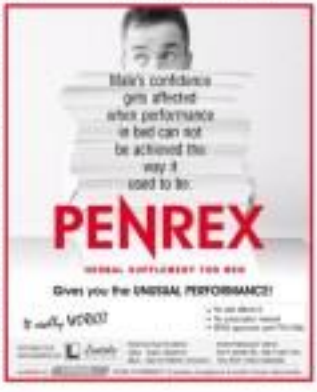
"Our target is to play in the Olympics," said Ongpin. "We're now working toward that goal by trying to get the national team in the Doha and hopefully, to the Fiba-Asia championships."

The Southeast Asian Basketball Association championships, slated in April, is the qualifier for the Asian Championships in July in Saitama, Japan. The top two finishers in the Asian country will gain automatic slots to the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

SBP officials feel failure to compete in the qualifying tournament would derail the unity efforts and shelve the formation of a potentially strong national cage delegation.

"We have a strong team and we don't want to miss the opportunity," said Reyes.

"It's sure to say that the 10 teams in the PBA would be asked to sacrifice for the national team," said Ongpin. "But it's still both doing to do."



FACE-OFF: Danny Ildefonso and Rico Villanueva confront each other in mid-court.

Fiery Ildefonso faces suspension

By Marc S. Carillo

TENSE OUT OF GAME 3 SUNDAY NIGHT, Sanchelan Brew mates Danny Ildefonso (now suspension) could miss tomorrow's Game 4 of the San Miguel Red Bull Final Four series in the Talk 'N Text-PBA Philippine Cup.

Ildefonso, who was ejected with still 8:44 to go after a fist-off with Red Bull counterpart Rico Villanueva at midcourt in Sunday's Game 3 at the Araneta Coliseum, appeared before league officials yesterday to explain his side of the incident.

Villanueva, teammate Justby Villanueva and others who answered the fist-other individual fouls in the game will follow suit today and tomorrow.

Regardless of the verdict on Ildefonso, the non-slam MVP will enjoy the full support of San Miguel Beer coach Chot Reyes.

"I told the players that they better be ready to fight it and take it," said Reyes, mentioned are a 100-82 clamping of the Rambo and a 2-1 lead in the best-of-seven series. "Mitos no long ang mailap (Let's see who's the toughest now)."

Reyes said he would accept it if Ildefonso, who scored 15 points in Game 3, is suspended for the next game after incurring four technical fouls. League officials, though, said an ejection—because of included fouls—does not merit an automatic suspension.

"If that's the price we have to pay, well take it," Reyes declared. "We'll just have to find other ways to win. The important thing is for us not to look down, not to be intimidated."

Red Bull coach Ryan Gregorio, though, was confused when told of Reyes' comments—as well as the deficit staring him in the face.

"We've been in worse situations," Gregorio said. "This was a big game, but not bigger than the next one (Game 4 tomorrow). (What Reyes said) should only motivate us to come out harder."

While acknowledging that his foes are not dirty players, Reyes reminded that the only way to play—and beat—Red Bull, is through the Rambo's own physical brand of game.

"We don't (hope and the Beermen), it might motivate," Gregorio said. "But his us, it's our normal style of play."

San Miguel literally came out hard, answering every hard bump with one that was harder, as compare Bruce and action halted on several occasions because of player confrontations.

"We like it better that (physical) way," Villanueva told the Inquirer while still inside the locker room after the game. "The fans will see just how tough Red Bull is."

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PEÑALOSA: Result-conscious fighter.

Peñalosa in undercard of Barrera-Marquez

By Edwin L. Lugambay, Correspondent

FORMER WORLD CHAMPION LORNY PEÑALOSA has accepted an offer to fight World Boxing Organization (WBO) super bantamweight champion Daniel Ponce De Leon on March 17 as the chief support to the Marco Antonio Barrera-Juan Manuel Marquez showdown at the MGM Grand Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas.

The bout has 38 rounds between and boxing-hosted fighters. Peñalosa owns a record of 32 wins against five defeats and two draws with 24 KOs, while Ponce De Leon is 20-1 with 20 KOs.

Their clash is part of the pay-per-view telecast of the card dubbed "Showtime" by promoter Oscar De la Hoya.

In an interview yesterday, Peñalosa said he would fly to Las Vegas this afternoon to stay to sign the fight contract with Ponce De Leon. He would then continue his training at the Wild Card gym of trainer-manager Freddie Roach.

But he follow him are his brother Ramon Amadeus and trainer Michael Barcenas, who is also hoping for a slot in the card. Both are still working to obtain their United States visa.

The 36-year-old Peñalosa has been training at his home gym in Pasahanan and sparring against Barcenas, a top-ranked featherweight, and a boxer named Alex.

Peñalosa also said The La Hoya-led Golden Boy Promotions will formally announce his fight with Ponce De Leon as soon as he signs the contracts.

Roach had earlier asked Peñalosa to take on Ponce De Leon, saying that the latter cannot win against the Filipino's style.

Ponce De Leon has campaigned successively in the 122-lb division and a bigger three Peñalosa, the former World Boxing Council (WBC) flyweight champion who is considerable in the 118-lb division.

"I have consulted my former managers Ayong Alcaraz and Rudy Salud, and they both said I should take the fight," said Peñalosa. Ponce De Leon is one big," said Peñalosa.

"But I have to make a final decision. I have decided to fight him because I'm not growing any younger, and I know that I can beat him."

Peñalosa also said he is aware that Ponce De Leon does not run from a fight and a dangerous with his counch-boxing style.

Sealers, Comets seek last semifinal berth

HUNKY HAVE THREE TO MOVE OVER INSULARS

Share today in their playoff for the fourth and last semifinal berth of the PBL Silver Cup at the Olivarez College Sports Center in Parañaque.

SAME TODAY
(Olivarez College Sports Center)
(1) vs. — (Game One)
(2) vs. — (Game One)

The Super Sealers and the Comets collide at 3 p.m. with the winner keeping a Final Four date against Hapee (9-2).

Meanwhile to settle the third time following its 79-72 triumph over Mail and More last week at the Super Sealers did a masterful job of limiting Comets big man Jill Quitalbon to only seven points.

"We moved around more," said Team coach Caloy Garcia. "We have to play that good against to beat Mail and More again."

But the Comets, who stayed alive because they enjoyed a twice-to-beat advantage in the quarterfinals, are expected to fight with renewed purpose as Mail and More coach Lawrence Chongson reserve after winning last Saturday's game due to a poor sentiment.

"We have to match their intensity," said Chongson. "We'll do our (in the last game), but I'm still positive we can beat them."

Mike Bravo, Ronjay Buenafe and Elmer Espiritu are also expected to help arrest an untimely stab for the Comets, who had a sensational 7-1 run highlighted by a six-game winning streak to the classification round.

The Sealers are fighting for survivalist the third straight time, having earlier dispatched Quezada Ice Cream in the second knockout phase (16-6 08-01 triumph.

"I've been telling the players even before we played Hapee that this every game will be important," said Garcia. "Our last and we're out, but the players are determined that we can do it."

The other semifinal pairing was completed last Saturday with Barbour Centre sweeping Tele-Tech in every-time to seal another encounter with Toyota Otis.

Jeannine M. Poyo

HEROES: Gino's Lawrence Borja gestures to the bastion in a recent game. —PBA IMAGES

SOUTHERN LADIES

SK teener back to defend crown

A CRACKLOGICAL FIELD THAT IN-cludes members of the national squad will be the only other South Korea's Crystal Elite gunning for a second straight victory in the SOUTHERN Ladies golf tournament which tees off Feb. 7 at the Bulo Golf and Country Club in Bulo.

The 72-hole-45 Bonnie shot makes, who romped away with the crown last year in Del Monte, has confirmed her participation in the event whose 66th staging coincides with RIZAL grand celebration of its centennial year.

Out to foil Shin's bid to flash it in list are Junior World champion Dottie Ardina and Cyna Rodriguez, Ria Flavia and Crystal Sagaral, Regina de Guzman and reigning national amateur champion Jane Rosal. Ladies Open titlist Carmencita Villaverana.

The event, to be conducted by the National Golf Association of the Philippines, has lured 120 starters.

The upside sweeping came from Pilot Wha L.SE Malaysia), Alabang, Riviera, Cebu Country Club, Club Filipino Cebu, Alta Vista, Sta-Elena, Forest Hills, Baguio), Tagaytay Highlands, Philippine Golf, Del Monte, Bigan Golf, Pueblo de Oro GCC, Southwoods, Antipolo GCC, Victorias, Negros Occidental SCC, Corinthian and Bacolod.

Aside from the premier Championship flight, other divisions on tap are Classes A, B, C and D and the seniors category (55-and above).

Open to players with certified handicaps or handicap indexes, the individual event will use the 36-hole scoring system.

Also on tap are the team and seniors tournaments slated in the first two days using the Stableford scoring format.

The traditional Lans has tournament will be held on Feb. 8.

The Ladies Choice of the four disk, hosted by Chit Quintales, has several participants of a pleasure stay in Bulo.

Registration is ongoing with the fee pegged at P1,000 Deadline for listing is Feb. 3. Milbea expert from Mayong B. Castillo

PBA taps veteran Fiba ref

THE PHILIPPINE BASKETBALL Association (PBA) has tapped the services of a long time Olsa Dolinea, two international basketball referee to lend his expertise to Asia's first professional league.

Olsa (Dolinea) Alpha Olsa Orchard and will be coming over at the end of the ongoing Talk N Text Philippine Cup to serve as PBA technical consultant for a month.

League commissioner Noli Eala said the hiring of the legendary Asian referee underscores the PBA's efforts to raising league officiating a notch higher.

"This is one area of further improving the technical skills of league officials and the officiating," said Eala.

"The PBA puts premium on self improvement and control."

Lady Tams stop UST volleybelles

By Jeannine W. Poyo

VOLLEYBALL GAMES
WOMEN'S DIVISION
(Rizal Memorial)
Today
12 p.m. — UE vs. UST (W)
5 p.m. — Adamson vs. NU (W)
Wednesday
12 p.m. — Ateneo vs. UST (W)

ONE EARTHEN U ENDED THE NINE-GAME winning run of powerhouse University of Santo Tomas in the Girls' volleyball tournament with a 22-25, 25-18, 26-24, 14-25, 25-21 victory Sunday night at the Rizal Eagle Gym in Kalayaan.

Led by Mary Ann Rimando, the Lady Tamaraws caught up with the Tigresses in the top with a 8-1 record to claim the remaining twice-to-twice advantage in the Final Four.

Rimando scored 18 points highlighted by 14 kills and three aces. Rachel Anne Daquis, who led the PSU attack in the second and third frames, also pounced on UST's anemic reception to after finish with 16 points.

"We had a better confidence and we gave importance in our servers," said PSU coach Joseph Lasquin.

University of the East earlier boosted its bid for the last Final Four slot by outclassing University of the Philippines in straight sets, 25-20, 25-21, 25-22.

Jeanette Bacon had 16 markers, including three aces and two blocks, to lead UE to at least a playoff for the fourth spot.

"I'm happy with the way the girls played, especially in the preparation of their plays," said coach Jose Reyes after UE notched its 10th win in 14 games.

The Lady Maroons dipped to 2-8 and dropped out of semifinal contention.

Rare Olympic shot for RP Blu Girls

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE ROAD TO THE BEIJING Olympics may be a bumpy one but the RP Blu Girls are determined to make the most out of the rare opportunity to climb the world stage once again.

Another story, who pitched the national team in the 2005 Southeast Asian Games gold medal, will lead the Blu Girls at the nationwide qualifiers set for Feb. 1-7 at the Taiwan Municipal Softball Stadium in Chinese Taipei.

Aside from the host country, New Zealand, South Korea, South Korea and Singapore are also seeking the only Olympic slot at stake in the qualifiers.

"It would be an honor if we the Blu Girls make it to Beijing," said Asia softball association of the Philippines president Ricky Vargas Jr. Thursday. "The task at hand is tough but I think the girls are prepared."

The Blu Girls ranked as high as No. 6 in the rankings the 1990s and, though Japan, China and Chinese Taipei have since emerged as the top Asian teams, they remained unconquered in Southeast Asia.

Ates, who hails from Tanza, Cavite, a bunch down the road pitched the pitcher on the roster as one of London Magnolia, Ayesa Ames, Ramia Arbid and Ate Bagtalo.

The team will train for the services of some of the country's finest players like pitcher Gloria Mateo and second baseswoman Aleedlyn Valenzuela, who are identified with another before in the sport.

Former Blu Girls star Abril Belzung is the coach. Assisting her are Frances Diaz and Noralou Pagkalinawan.

The Blu Girls face Singapore in the morning and South Korea in the afternoon on Feb. 1.

"We are confident against Singapore and South Korea," said Belzung. "They will arrive as our toughest games for the toughest schedules ahead."

The Taiwanese played second in the recent Doha Asiad behind Japan, China was third followed by South Korea and South Korea.

THE RP Blu Girls take time off from their hectic practice session to pose for a souvenir shot.

SPORTSWATCH

First tri-media badminton backed

PJ-PI 'Away-Kalipay sa Talisay' Feb. 19

World champ joins Makati int'l derby

400 vie in Religion anniversary 5-cocker

BY TOP CHOICE

School dropout 'rides' off with millions

By Mussing R. Castillo

HE THAT PUTTETH GOES AROUND

Nip Barbosato puts it up, and it may have been an unconscious, for everything has been looking up for Jonathan B. Hernandez ever since.

A high school dropout who resolved to "ride" rather than be ridden as a 15-year-old, "Jay" Hernandez now sits on top of the local horseracing world, winning more than P67 million for lucky owners from 228 victories last year. That made him the unanimous choice on top jockey for the second straight season.

Still, 16 percent or his mounted contenders, Hernandez, who idolized the hard-driving veteran Marcelino Obaniyo and Virgilio Carbonerra, easily landed the a handsome 34.7 million last year.

"Kinuha ang ma mata namin from my unique riding style," the cold-mannered, 26-year-old said in Filipino during a late Thursday night talk with the hacienta.

Aerodynamic way

"Sam the only jockey (in the country) who can ride a horse in the most aerody-namic way.

"Ma'at hat pro-ka-ti-ibabaw ng kabayo, eh. (Naka-ilit ito nang maiksing-maiksing."

He developed that style inside the stables, where he usually pestered other skipping his second year high school classes.

LIVING life in style, millionaire jockey Jonathan B. Hernandez arrives at the stables in Santa Ana Park.

"Since he would pressured that he was too a race while the horses were being walked under by their grooms to warm them down after an early morning workout.

"That's where I got worried, because many other than me, my parents would catch me there," Hernandez recounted with a laugh. "Sad lang after, I was dropped from my class and I never returned to school again."

He entered the jockeys' academy then handled by former ace jockey George Ilarde, soon after and graduated with the batch of 1997 along with Jeffrey T. Zamora and Gilda Rivera.

Hernandez, who swam several inches

become an apprentice rider without difficulty, beating home more than 40 winners in his required two-year "residency" period before graduating, at 17 years old, as a Class A rider, a label which he has held on to for the last nine years.

Growing up in the stables surrounding the Santa Ana Park in Makati, it was a natural decision for him to pursue a living as a jockey, the same jobs his father, the late Rafael Hernandez, Jr. (who was jockey in war), and his grandfather, Teodoro G. Rivera, held.

"I knew that I was born to ride and make a living out of it," Hernandez, a single father to Nathan (six, said. "I knew that I had to work hard to stand out."

His first job as a groom's assistant when he was only 15 paid him no more than P700. And that came only when the boss is he "walked around" would win.

Like a PBA superstar

Then he took matters into his own hands by entering the jockeys' academy and eventually emerging as a multi-talented athlete, much in the mold of superstar Philippine Basketball Association players and other high-profile athletes.

"So of now, there's nothing more to ask," said Hernandez, who piloted Silver Envy to a Triple Crown sweep in 2003. "I've won almost all the stakes races, except one—the Presidential Gold Cup."

"The only thing remaining is that Gold Cup," he said. "And I hope I get the chance to ride final Spiny in that race."

Real Spiny was honored with formal-dee in the recent Philippine Sportswriters Association Awards as Horse of the Year.

Gold Cup or not, a win aboard the real Spiny perhaps would certainly be a ride to watch.

Valle makes mark in US pool circuit

VALLE: Java winner

IT'S CASEY VALLE! Just to create a ripple in the United States billiards circuit.

Valle, the city star from Davao City outthought and outplayed Kevin Trommel, 9-6, in the finals to win the Derrick Stutz 9-Ball Championship of the Just NE 9-Ball Tour in Providence, Rhode Island, over the weekend.

The victory was worth $1,500 (about P75,000) for Valle, who became the first Filipino to win in the Just Tour this year.

Valle, a double gold medalist in the 1998 Bangkok Asiad Games, that raised his total to $4,245 (about P212,500) in the young tour.

Earlier, Valle placed 11th in the Derby City Classic 9-Ball in Louisville, Kentucky and third in the previous stop of the Just Tour in the Corbett Billiard in Bridgeport, New Jersey.

The 2005 Singapore leg titlist of the IBSF Asian 9-Ball Tour started the final day of the 96-player double elimination tournament with a 9-4 victory over Joe Tucker.

Valle followed it up with a 9-5 win over Trommel in the battle for the first seat.

United States-based Filipino fastest Jaime Jaime Sr. (Cebu) is the lone ex-US Filipino finalist after topping the loser's bracket. But he lost to Trommel, 9-5, in the duel for the last finals berth.

Valle reasserted his supremacy over Trommel in the finals, clustering five racks to take the lead, 5-2 (8-0 deficit).

Trommel earned $1,000 while Tucker took home $1,500.

Tournament favorites Mike Zeglen, Joey Kowiak, Jose Fernandez and the world's top lady player Karen Corr failed to make it to the money round.

"Casey (Valle) is off to a good start," said billiards and Snooker Congress of the Philippines head Ernie Esguerra. "He was quite silent the past year. I know he can sustain his fine showing in the $5 pool circuit."

Valle's best effort last year was a second-place finish behind 2004 World Pool champion Efren Bagalayan in the BCP National Championship in Manila. Marlon Bernardino, Contributor

BACK IN THE HUNT: Defending champion Scott Strange.

Open pro-am: Champ won't be a Strange-r

Crack field samples W. Wack East again

By Mussing R. Castillo

DEFENDING CHAMPION SCOTT STRANGE pulls to sample Wack Wack East when the pro-am event, which officially kicks off the First Philippine Open, tees off today.

Most of the other entries in the crack field are renowned, including legendary local hope Frankie Miñoza, the 1998 winner seeing action in the tournament for the first time in four years.

A total of 20 teams, each composed of one professional and three amateur guests, are vying for handsome cash prizes and merchandise.

Tee off is 7:30 a.m. shotgun style, with the four teams, one of the toughest layouts in Asia, expected to show its teeth this early.

Asia's oldest Open gets under way Thursday as the four layout with 156 players from 25 countries shooting for the $45,000 top prize out of the total cash pot of $200,000.

Aside from Strange and Miñoza, other top players seeing action are Anthony Kang, the draw two and Clay Devers of the United States, Thailand's Thaweesi Pitaichol and Chawarin Phophol, former winner Rick Gibson of Canada, and England's Ben St. John.

Australian Adam Le Brocque, the 2006 winner in Malaysian in Lipa City, homegrown hopes Angelo Que, Antonio Murakami, Carlito Villanueva, Tony Lascuña and Adam Tan. 2006 top rookie Jovit Bagunas are also in the pro-am field.

The Pan Gentleman Foundation of Jose Miguel Arroyo and the International Container and Terminal Services Inc. of Enrique Razon Jr., San Miguel Corp., Philippine Airlines (PAL), Smart Communications, Inc., Shemco, Ramon Tabernilla, JAC Liner, Absolut, 100 Plus Isotonic Sports Drink and Absolute are supporting the four-day event ending Sunday.

Cardona earns 3rd Player of Week honors

PLAYING HERO IN THE TALK 'N TEXT PBA Philippine Cup is getting in between Mark Cardona.

Just two days after striking a clutch game winner, Cardona again drew up big time, enabling the Talk 'N Text Phone Pals to make it four in a row over the Barangay Ginebra Kings in their best-of-seven semifinal showdown.

"It's fun really extended his game a notch higher to the playoffs," noted TNT coach Derick Pumaren of his 6-foot-3 sophomore, who is once again named as the PBA Press Corps' second TNT Player of the Week for Jan. 22-28.

Third citation

"I just hope he keeps playing this way," added Pumaren.

CARDONA, only third time so far

It was the third such selection for Cardona, who was also bestowed the same honor for the periods Nov. 6-12 and Jan. 15-21, making him the first three-time recipient of the award used as one of the gauges for voting the conference's Best Player.

The honor also spurred the former La Salle Green Archer ahead of an elite list of two-time winners of the weekly award that includes Ali Ed's Gary David, Asi Miguel Sheer's Sunny Sright, Alaska's Willie Miller, and Coca-Cola's Mark Caguioa and Rudy Hatfield.

Game-winning trey

Cardona initially shone with a team-high 21 point shooting, topped by a clutch, game-winning three-pointer, in TNT's 99-96 win over Ferdinand Jr. He added the Phone Pals' rise from a 109-101 loss in the series opener just two nights before.

Cardona also had four rebounds, two assists, two steals and a block after a steady four-point Game One performance.

Meeting the challenge

The follow-up came last Sunday when the 20-year-old 6-foot-3 PELDEVO scattered 18 points in the second half and helped TNT score a 109-100 win that gave the teams 2-1 lead in the series.

Cardona started the hot pocked up his game in the second half with 13 points in the third period while rose ing the challenge of the very potent Gaptiva lineup.

Cardona had the last laugh in the head-to-head as the Barangay Ginebra was would only five blanks in the fourth canto.

Fiery Aguilar shows who's boss

AGUILAR: Two wins

MULTITITLED BUTSBA-certified Jayjay Aguilar bagged the one premier crown Sunday in the first Mayor Freddie Tinga Cup Maratona as the newly built Fast Track Motorsports Park in Clipper Beach, Tagaig City.

Aguilar, the first Asian Maratona champion in 2004, handily won the Pro Open and Pro 125 races over Rolando Ian Andres.

Jerry Revis placed third while Emanuel Tuazon and Kenneth Ballena wound up fourth and fifth, respectively in both events.

Called "Bat Bat" Tinagan topped the Amco GI 4-stroke after an exciting showdown with Arish Mitra, who won the first race before the eventual champion assumed himself in their second meeting.

Jessy Agcaoili took third while Apoli Ortiz and TJ Alfaro ended fourth and fifth, respectively.

Jessie Ahmad bagged the Junior 85 plus-one Jun Carlo Bellosa and Nic Mac Garcia Lorenzo while TJ Alfaro won the Demure 50 class over Jessy Agcaoili and Lucas Aguilar.

The other winners were Ambassie Leyva (Sportsmanship), Mario Nino Garcia (Senior Open Production), Gino Bernie (Beginner Open Production), Ian Andres Andres (Veterans), Nani Panopaan (Executive), Gerald Nanada (Novice Local Stature), Von Mendez Gucel (Novice Open) and Jessie Sarmiento (Underbone).

The event, sanctioned by the National Motorcycle Sports and Safety Association and promoted by Xtreme Mark Philippines, also served as the debut tune-up for the upcoming 2007 season of the FIM Asian Motocross Championship Series Tour, which starts on March 4 in Puerto Princesa City.

FIRST DRIVE: National Golf Association of the Philippines president and Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza hits the ceremonial tee-driving of the first Ambassador Golf Tournament at the Sherwood Hills Golf Club in Tanza Mariina, Cavite. In the background are Philippine Ambassador to China Romulo Wilson Gaa and retired general Edgardo Aglipay. The tournament, held for the benefit of the General Kalaga Foundation, aims to promote the country as a golf destination.

SPORTS

Suns stretch NBA win streak to 17

Finley lifts Spurs past Lakers

CLEVELAND—THE PHOENIX SUNS move their 17th consecutive game with a 115-100 road win over the Cleveland Cavaliers to tie the seventh-longest winning streak in NBA history.

Steve Nash had 22 points and 13 assists as Phoenix outscored 38 points by the Cavaliers' LeBron James with five players in double figures.

In Los Angeles, Michael Finley nailed a three-pointer with a second to go in overtime to give the San Antonio Spurs a stunning 99-94 victory over the Los Angeles Lakers on Sunday.

Finley took a pass from Tim Duncan and drilled the long-range shot, his fifth three-pointer of the night, to finish with 17 points as San Antonio prevailed despite shooting only 33.7 percent.

Vladimir Radmanovic took a three-pointer for the Lakers with 27 seconds remaining to send the game into the extra period at 86-86, but he missed a similar long distance effort to win the contest at the end of regulation.

NBA on TV Today
9 a.m.—Portland vs Boston; Indiana at/vs Houston; 11:30 a.m.—Phoenix at Cleveland

Kobe Bryant scored 31 points for Los Angeles. He gave the Lakers a 94-92 lead on a jumper with seven seconds remaining in overtime, before Finley delivered his long shot.

Duncan added 21 points, 14 rebounds and nine assists for the Spurs. Rasho Nesterovic also had 21 for San Antonio.

Antawn Jamison had 34 points as Eastern Conference-leader Washington handed the Boston Celtics their 11th straight loss, a 105-91 setback at Boston. Gilbert Arenas had 21 points and 11 assists for Boston.

Chris Webber contributed 17 points and 11 rebounds and Dorell Wright added 16 points as coach Flip Saunders won his 500th game, a 10-4-7 home record over the Eastern Division Pacers.

Jermaine O'Neal led Indiana with 26 points, 12 rebounds and five blocked shots.

Milwaukee Bucks guard Mo Williams, who missed nine games with a shoulder injury, returned to score 18 points in a 107-105 home win over the New York Knicks. Reuters

AHOMW! Byrum of the Lakers duels against the Spurs. AFP

Shaquille helps police nab hit-and-run driver

MIAMI—BASKETBALL STAR Shaquille O'Neal helped police capture a hit-and-run driver early Sunday morning, hours after his Miami Heat teammates had lost in Chicago without him.

"Shaq" said bodyguard Jerome Crawford were just back from Chicago, where the Bulls edged the defending National Basketball Association champions 108-97. O'Neal did not play after two surgeries both following a long knee surgery absence.

O'Neal, a master Miami Beach police officer, was outside Crawford's home in Gerstein Court unloading luggage at about 4:30 a.m. when a motorist drove by in 16-year-old Francisco Chire-owned late 1994's parked 2007 Cadillac.

O'Neal and his bodyguard leaped into the damaged vehicle and trailed the man for almost five minutes before crashing up with him and passenger Jamie Rondon, who told the Miami Herald they were afraid to stop.

O'NEAL, A reserve Miami Beach police officer.

"He was going to stop, but then we saw the lowrider coming on," Rondon said. "We got scared and kept driving."

Rondon said he was unarmed to see O'Neal, a 7-foot-1 center who led the Heat to the historic first NBA crown last year, step from the vehicle.

"I couldn't believe that," Rondon said. "Of all the people I mean, damn."

"He told us to shut up. He said, 'I don't want to talk to you right now.'"

O'Neal, 34, warned now a nearby police officer, Rondon said, and police chief Chris Ivy hearing the scene of an accident.

O'Neal was made a police officer in December of 2000, three months after helping officers capture a man accused of a shots crime.

Last June, while O'Neal was toppling before game five of the NBA Finals, a man who had been abducted in Miami Beach was dropped in front of O'Neal's home and buried the NBA star's house, prompting "Shaq" to call police who later arrested two men in connection with the incident. AFP

Montoya's team prevails

DAYTONA BEACH, FLORIDA—SEGUNDO Juan Pablo Montoya is already paying dividends for Chip Ganassi, and the start of the NASCAR season is still three weeks off.

Montoya, co-driving a Jamie Riley Daytona Prototype with veteran road racer Scott Pruett and Mexican phenom Salvador Duran, in the first campaign. He and racing great Dario Andretti are the only drivers to have won the Indianapolis 500, an American open-wheel championship, a Formula One race and the Colombian's latest conquest, a sports car endurance race at Daytona International Speedway.

"What's next?

"I'm back here for the Daytona 500 in a couple of weeks," said Montoya, set to begin his first full season in NASCAR's Busch Cup series. "Hopefully, we can do something about that race, too."

Andretti's team clinched NASCAR's title in 1967.

Ganassi was asked if the win in the Rolex 24 bodes well for Montoya's move back to the US after several successful but unfulfilling years in F1?

"It's a good start, I'll tell you that," said Ganassi, his veteran's team won the CART title in 1999 and lost it in 2000.

Montoya gave his team the lead Sunday morning and "knew keep it on the finish. This is the second straight year that Ganassi's team has won the grueling 24-hour event. Former IRL champions Dan Wheldon and Scott Dixon contributed with NASCAR driver Casey Mears to win the 2006 race.

"This was just a total team win," said Ganassi, the first team owner to win this race back-to-back since 41 Holbert in 1986 and 1987. The winning car covered 668 laps and 2,278 miles. AP

Woods spells relevance of 7th straight triumph

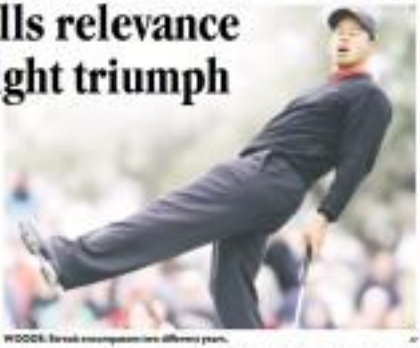
SAN DIEGO—TIGER WOODS TOOK GREAT care to spell out the relevance of his seventh consecutive victory on the PGA Tour after clinching the Buick Invitational by two shots on Sunday.

Although he fifth title at Torrey Pines lifted him behind only Byron Nelson in Tour win streaks, his majority run of form since last July has been punctuated by two second-place finishes in Asia.

"You have to clarify it, it's not a worldwide streak," Woods told reporters after firing a six-under-par 66 on the challenging South Course. "It's not a worldwide streak. It's a PGA Tour streak ... and on top of that, it encompasses two different years, just like '99 and 2000."

The world number one, whose style was shown back to last year's British Open, won six consecutive PGA Tour events from the 1999 WGC-NEC Invitational to the 2000 Mobile Beach Invitational Pro-Am.

Woods has not finished worse than second since the Tabasco Open last July after posting successive spots at the ANBC tournament in China and the Dunlop Phoenix in Japan last November.



WOODS: Streak encompasses two different years.

"I lost in China and I lost in Japan," he added. "There are some [a disaster] in there, they are not all 'Ws' I mean."

Nevertheless, the 13-times major winner was clearly proud after moving one step closer to Sam Snead's record of 81 PGA Tour victories.

"As far as seven in a row, it's pretty elite company to be mentioned in the breath of Mr. Nelson," Woods said. Reuters

Call me genius, says Federer

MELBOURNE—NO WONDER Roger Federer wishes he could jump into a time machine and go back through the years to have a shot at Rod Laver or Bjorn Borg.

With no real rival in sight, the Swiss master completed the most dominant men's grand slam campaign in 27 years when he toppled Chilean Fernando Gonzalez at the Australian Open on Sunday to win his 10th major crown.

Not since Borg's run to the 1980 Roland Garros title had a man won a grand slam title without dropping a set in the tournament.

As the opened his Federer Express bus have been going, Pete Sampras' record haul of 14 majors will be wiped from the history books by 2008.

It took the American 12 years to amass his trophies, Federer has scooped up nine in just 30 to just over 5-1/2.

"For me, it's really many how many I've won," the Swiss said following his 7-6, 6-4, 6-4 win.

"If somebody would have told me I'd win 10 grand slams from mid 2003 till today, I mean would have thought those was any chance of doing something like that.

"If I were another player, I would be amazed a little bit to see always the same guy winning."

If Federer himself is amazed, his peers must be sick of seeing the all-conquering Swiss in the other side of the net.

Andy Roddick dared to suggest last week that the rest of the world was closing the gap with Federer. That theory was blown with spot when the world number one pulverised the American sixth seed in the semifinals for the loss of just six games.

Federer moulded into his seventh successive grand slam final at Melbourne Park, equalling the record of Australian Jack Crawford set in 1934.

"I guess you can call me a genius because I'm completing many of my opponents, kind of maybe playing a bit different, you know, winning when I'm not playing my best," said Federer. Reuters

FEDERER: His rival.

Premium
Congratulates
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For its
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4-COCK DERBY

DERBY SCHEDULE
ELIMINATION ROUND:
JAN 30 - 2 COCK
FEB. 1 - 2 COCK
FEB. 3 - 2 COCK
SEMI-FINAL: (0-0); (0-1/2) (1-0)
FEB. 5 = 4 COCK

Compliments of BEAN

BUSINESS

Editor Raul G. Pangalangan ● Assistant Editor Corrie S. Mariano

$1-B Nonoc mines rehab deal collapses

Philnico opens doors to other investors

By Dexter L. Lasco

EXCLUSIVE NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN PHILNICO Industrial Corp. and China's Jinchuan Nonferrous Metals Corp. on a proposed $1-billion rehabilitation of the Nonoc nickel mines have collapsed.

In a message sent to the bourse, Philnico president Evaristo Serrano Jr. said his firm ended talks with Jinchuan after the prospective Chinese investor insisted on doing another feasibility study, which would push back the project's launch significantly.

This feasibility study, he said, "would delay considerably the project by six to 12 months, without any assurance of a definitive agreement."

"So we decided to consider other options to move the project forward," he said, adding that Philnico has started talks with other groups—including two others from China—to bid to revive the project.

"Since the move of the mill to our negotiations, there [have been] four companies from China [and], Russia and Japan who have expressed serious interest," Serrano said.

Located on Nonoc island off Surigao City, the nickel mines is touted to hold one of the biggest nickel and cobalt deposits in Southeast Asia.

The investment needed to rehabilitate the project would have been the single biggest Chinese investment in the country dwarf.

[...A NONOC, B2]

PDIC eyes sale of P15B in acquired assets

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE STATE-OWNED PHILIPPINE Deposit Insurance Corp. is planning to sell as much as P15 billion worth of bad assets accumulated from its receivership, liquidation and rehabilitation of ailing banks.

PDIC president Michael Dominic told reporters that the agency would seek legal clearance on whether it could avail itself of the fiscal incentives offered by the Special Purpose Vehicle Law for the planned asset sale.

"We have had several meetings with [auditing firms] KPMG and Ernst & Young, to know how they can assist us, to determine whether we can [use the SPV framework]," Dominic said.

The SPV law intends to help banks get rid of their nonperforming assets by entering some of the loans and reducing lost usually suffered in the sale of

[...ASSETS, B4]

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AEV to pour ₱6B into power sector

Fund raised from sale of treasury shares

By Dexter L. Lusaya

PUBLICLY LISTED AboitizEquity Ventures (AEV) raised P6.1 billion, equivalent to $124 million, from its sale of treasury shares to fund its investment in the power sector.

In a disclosure to the stock exchange, the Cebu-based conglomerate said the funds were raised from the successful placement of 742,311,000 treasury shares with institutional and local investors.

The shares were sold at P8.26 apiece.

"The price represents a discount of 5.5 percent to the share price close of P8.70 on Jan. 26, 2007," AEV corporate secretary M. Jasmine Ojeo-Yu said in a letter to the Philippine Stock Exchange.

It was conducted through an overnight or bought deal.

Around 92 percent of the offering, which domestic investors bought the remaining eight percent.

"The offering saw high quality demand from approximately 80 institutional investors in the United States, Europe and Asia," she said. "The proceeds of the sale will be used by AEV for various greenfield power projects, as well as for the participation in the privatization of the National Power Corp.'s power plants."

Recently, the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. awarded the 360-megawatt Magat Hydroelectric Power Plant to SN Aboitiz Power Inc., a joint venture between Aboitiz Power Corp. and SN Power of Norway, after the firm submitted the highest bid of US$530 million for the power facility located in Isabela province.

In connection with the placement, AEV has agreed with placement agents to a lock-up undertaking, restricting the issue of AEV shares for a period ending three months from the date of completion of the placement, the company said earlier.

Shares of AEV ended yesterday's trading session at P8.48 apiece, lower by P0.10 from the previous session's close, with P69.4 million worth of shares changing hands.

Stocks up slightly

From page B1

leans of 2006 growth figures due later this week, Reuters said.

Investment site stock.com.ph counselor Carlo Capco expected this week to favor buying choices, they said.

The composite index rose 14.54 points to end at the day's high of 3,177.26. It hit a low of 3,155.38.

The broader all-share index rose 6.54 points to 1,935.48.

Gainers led losers 71 to 45, while 48 stocks were unchanged. Volume was 2.89 billion shares worth P6.87 billion.

"The major correction last Friday presented bullish traders fresh buying opportunity," Dr Market Investors president Sonny Aguila said.

However, he said investors were less aggressive this time as many of them preferred to buy at bigger discounts.

Ivan Rellin, an analyst at AB Capital Securities Inc., said in a note: "Lower country risks have resulted in a better valuation for most big cap issues. Adjustments to PLDT has resulted in a conservative valuation of P3,000/share for the cash-rich firm."

Top-traded Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. was up P5 at P2,855. AFP

Shape of stings to come

JUST BETWEEN US GIRLS, who is this fortunate individual who wants to bring out of the country some loose change amounting to $300 million? In dollars or in preliminary sawbills.

The OFWs of this country endure themselves overseas to send foreign exchange to the country, and that $300 million transaction is going the other way.

That's why the Bangko Sentral, according to whispers going around financial circles, is taking time to review the request.

One of the biggest banks in the country today is rumored to have sent the application over to the Shanghai Bureau's policy-making Monetary Board.

The loose change — perhaps hefting that the courier has some hidden political link — wanted no time in sending the matter over to Malacañang. Oops.

And all along everybody thought that the Monetary Board is an "independent" body freed by law from political ties over with this core administration.

It's just that Gloriastan had the wisdom to fill up the Monetary Board with political appointees, apparently as "payback" for his iron-fisting the election.

But the juiciest tension as to the identity of the individual, or individuals, behind the application to wash unusual such a fantastic amount in dollars.

I mean, who has that kind of money, free from any encumbrance, not tied up in any businesses, and he, she, it or they can just decide one day to send it out, in US$ it?

• • •

Once again, the Department of Finance is overtaxing the revenue collection "target" of the Bureau of Internal Revenue for 2006.

Again, that was the target for last year, and as you may remember why on Gudger's middle foot down the DOF every bother with it today, in 2007.

Of primary importance is the BOF, you see, is whether or not the BIR guys are entitled to "cash incentives" for their collection performance last year.

For sure, there have been media reports insisting that the BIR missed its target, laying the blame on BIR Commissioner Jose Charlie Padilla personally.

Also, the DOF itself has already admitted that the BIR missed the target, simply because the inflation rate and the interest rates in 2006 were lower than what the DOF projected in setting the target.

In fact, the DOF even gave such a turbulent reason for its missing the target to no less than the London-based Fitch credit rating agency.

In other words, the target that was set by the DOF itself was wrong.

In reviewing the target, the BOF wants to recommend the course of action for this rate administration, i.e., to award or not to award "cash bonus" to the BIR guys.

The fact is that, like it or not (and this goes to those salivating over Bodagi's position), the Bantoists since Binay that the BIR did exceed the jobless years.

It collected some P474 billion last year, if you remember early in own tax operations, against the P586 billion collected in 2005 — that's an increase of P114 billion.

It simply means that BIR people work from the darnedest. Now, do they or do they not deserve to get the cash incentives?

• • •

Former finance secretary (and former trade and industry secretary) Cesar Purisima, a leading figure of the "Hyatt 10," is still riding.

Then, there is an uncle to suspect that Purisima staged his own brand of coup d'etat at the accounting firm Manumphan and Loyo.

The firm has a no-go with SEC-BIR accounting firms in the Hinterlands.

It was formed by former SEC big shot Mario Manumphan, in partnership with another ex-Cabinet member, former Central Bank governor Jaydee the Marcos dictatorship) Jaime Laya, who also served as budget secretary during martial law.

With such a distinguished pedigree, the firm was said to be attractive enough to guys like Purisima, who used to be SGV managing director, right before he was drawn by the cozy administration into public office.

From what I gathered, the soft-spoken Purisima just got tired of the "hassle" of being a business person so that he knows longer must.

• • •

In rounding off the items were the inevitability of a water shortage in the metropolis by 2010, the DENR had perfect timing.

For me, this con administration just signed an agreement with a new consortium to operate the water services area of the bankrupt Maynilad.

In fact, the consortium, the group of the high profile PLDT chair Manny Pangilinan (who at the same time is trying to fix the mess in his lucrative sport: basketball) partnered with the construction group Ayala.

Now, friendly lawyers that Maynilad was doomed to fail from the start because of the leaking old pipes in its concession area.

In banking circles, they are talking about the shape of things to come. Maybe the concessions will be the government "wing" in getting the problem-ati-ic Maynilad area.

Really, our MWP and company expect to make money in the water business? Or will the consortium be content with making money in the construction side — laying down new pipes for instance which, nevertheless may require — well, "con adjustments."

And still can not be more still lying to accept the higher rates, if only to prevent the impending water crisis, made public by the screaming DENR Secretary Angelo Reyes?

Here ago, San Miguel Corp. already knew about the water shortage that could hit consumers by 2010. But Miguel even bought a huge area in Tanauan with lots of freshwater.

So here comes the DENR talk on about to only now!

$1-B Nonoc mines rehab deal collapses

From page B1

ing over the $400-million North Sual system launched last year.

According to sources familiar with the deal, negotiations between Philnico and Benguet collapsed due to disagreements over the operating structure of the Tampakan rehabilitation has been completed.

Philnico, which owns the mining rights on Nonoc Island, wanted to be given a bigger share of the rehabilitated firm's equity, and, consequently, its earnings. The Chinese side, on the other hand, allegedly insisted on retaining the firm in such a way that the bulk of the profits would be made in China and not by the unit operating locally.

This time around, Narvasa said the two sides will maintain the insouse with the best offer for the rehabilitation of the Nonoc mines, which was shuttered in 1998 amid falling commodity prices worldwide.

"We would like to assist the process via negotiation in order to assure the best terms for all our stakeholders and the country," he said. In contrast, the proposed deal with Benguet was sealed through a government-to-government agreement between President Macapagal-Arroyo and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao.

The Philnico chief's more reserved statement stands in sharp contrast with his usual optimism that the Philippine government would help broker a deal between both parties.

Given the stringent of the talks with Benguet, the time it will take to strike a new deal with any of the prospective investors, Nonoc mines may restart operations in 2009, at the earliest, historians said.

PDIC eyes sale of ₱15B in acquired assets

From page B1

mandate of assets. The law waived the documentary stamp tax, capital gains tax and expanded value-added tax and therefore reduced the registration transfer fees by half.

But since PDIC is a banking regulator and not a bank, Ocampo said the institution would like a confirmation on whether it could be covered by the law.

"If we're allowed to sell (these SPA), we'll do it," Ocampo said, adding that the sale of the assets will be made in batches.

Right now, he said the PDIC was already selling bad assets on a retail basis.

"But we can't hold on it for long," Ocampo said. "It's hard to sell nonperforming especially if it involves the land in the provinces."

He said Finance Secretary Margarito Teves, who also chairs PDIC, was supportive of efforts to hasten the disposal process under the Bureau Retirement) Juanito Leyva, who also served as budget secretary during martial law.

With such a distinguished pedigree, the firm was said to be attractive enough to guys like Purisima, who used to be SGV managing director, right before he was drawn by the cozy administration into public office.

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Manila Water receives corporate honors

PUBLICLY LISTED MANILA WATER Co. Inc. was recently voted second best firm for overall corporate governance in the country, according to a recent survey conducted by Asiamoney magazine.

In a statement to the stock exchange, Manila Water said the criteria for the survey were "disclosure and transparency, responsibilities of management and the board of directors, shareholders' rights and equitable treatment and investor relations."

The Ayala-owned firm, which came behind the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. in the second ranking, operates the eastern concession area for Metro Manila's water zone.

Manila Water president Antonio T. Aquino said he considered the high ranking as a significant achievement since the company was given only "a matter of months" since the firm's listing in March 2005.

"The results of the Asiamoney survey affirm our commitment to observing the highest standards of corporate governance," Aquino said. "It motivates us to further improve our strong platform of governance."

Asiamoney, a leading financial publication, conducted the survey among CEOs, chief information officers, and senior executives from fund management and hedge fund companies in the Asia-Pacific region, the UK and USA, as well as head of research and senior analysts in brokerages across the region.

The publication received a total of 88 valid responses from 50 institutions.

Seventeen companies were cited in the survey, with Manila Water coming after PLDT.

Manila Water's parent firm, Ayala Corp., was voted third best in the rankings. Dexter L. Lusaya

Alliance moves to promote use of biofuels

Launches educational caravan on Feb. 3-13

By Bernie W. Dominguez

THE PHILIPPINE FUEL ETHANOL Alliance yesterday said it was launching this weekend a caravan that would showcase vehicles that run on biofuels in the wake of the recent signing into law of the Biofuels Act as well as on four basic fuel that encourages the huge scale use of cleaner fuels.

Private groups, government and private sector backers of large-scale use of biofuels, including the Philippine Sugar Millers Association, Sugar Regulatory Administration, Center for Alcohol Research and Development and Farmer Corp.

Officials of PSEA said it was working with the Department of Energy, the US Sustainable Energy Development Program, Isuzu, and independent distributing E10 ensuring the caravan that runs from Pangasinan to Buena Starts on Feb. 3 to Davao Oriental Feb. 13.

The officials said the campaigns would feature vehicles that run on bioethanol (gasoline) and biodiesel to help educate the general public on specific concerns relating to the use of biofuels.

The caravan would cover Southern Luzon until Feb. 2 and would stop at Isuzu in Subic, Isu. Rosa in Laguna and the cities of Lipa and Batangas in Southern Tagalog. Radio DZJJ in Pasay in Iloilo, the cities of Bacolod and San Carlos in Negros Island; Legazpi de Oro City and Malaybalay City in Bukidnon.

PSEA and public forums on the subject would be conducted in these selected key cities—Subic, Bacolod, and Legazpi de Oro. Representatives of public and private marketing groups, business groups, the academe, and local governments units are expected to attend.

In particular, speakers from the DOE, the Automobile Association of the Philippines, and Chito Cleto Coalition of the Philippines would discuss issues on vehicle compatibility and fuel economy.

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Extension of NLEX concession seen

By Michelle V. Ramos

MANILA NORTH Tollways Corp. (MNTC) said a decision on the additional 25-year concession to operate and develop the North Luzon Expressway was possible given the delays in the implementation of projects extending the NLEX.

Rodrigo Franco, MNTC executive vice president, said construction of some of the projects has not been on schedule given various causes of delays, such as difficulty in settling right-of-way.

Under its concession contract with the government, MNTC is supposed to undertake road widening and take charge of rehabilitating and developing the NLEX. The company's borrowing limit ceilings are not covered by a sovereign guaranty, Franco noted.

On the other hand, the government should handle right-of-way issues that should be addressed to push the MNTC's projects through.

Franco, however, said that certain fiscal problems of the government in the past adversely affected capability to pay the cost of getting rights-of-way.

The first phase of the NLEX was recently completed. This involved the rehabilitation and expansion of the existing 84-kilometer stretch connecting Metro Manila to Sta. Ines, Pampanga.

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NISSAN

Lafayette may reopen Rapu Rapu mine on Feb. 5

Company commits to complete repairs on time

AUSTRALIAN LAFAYETTE MINING Ltd. may be allowed to reopen its Rapu Rapu mine on Feb. 5, more than a year after an elusive deal to mine minerals ripples, a government official said.

Orlando Ramos, head of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau, said Lafayette had committed to finish by early next month all the necessary repairs of structures and leaking facilities that were damaged by typhoon Durian in late November.

"The ball is in their court," Ramos said. "Lafayette has committed to the government to make the repairs, mine, mill and tailings dam operational by Feb. 5."

"The DENR (Department of Environment and Natural Resources) may lift the cease-and-desist order on Feb. 5 if they comply with all the requirements," he added.

The government allowed Lafayette to test its base metals facility from July 16 to Dec. 31 last year, after the Supreme Court upheld in December 2004 the legality of a law granting 100 percent foreign ownership of mining projects, up from 40 percent previously.

But the spill in Rapu Rapu caused the ire of Philippine Catholic bishops and environment groups.

Before the suspension, the mine was forecast to generate revenues of $350 million a year from the production of 18,000 tons of copp per concentrate, 14,000 tons of zinc, 50,000 ounces of gold and 600,000 ounces of silver.

In June, Lafayette paid a fine of P62.6 million imposed by the Philippine government after the spills.

All International Corp. and Australian Bauxite Corp. (Bauxite) together hold 26 percent of Lafayette Philippines Inc. while Australia's Lafayette owns the rest.

Tantoco said Rapu Rapu's metal production was added by LC International to China. AB/CTB/

AirAsia seeking more flights to RP

By Tess Arceo-Dumlao

MALAYSIAN BUDGET AIRline AirAsia has expressed interest in expanding its operations in the Philippines to help the government in its efforts to promote the local tourism industry.

In a briefing on the sidelines of the recently concluded World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, AirAsia chief executive officer Tony Fernandes said he was "a big fan" of the Philippines. As such, he said he wanted to help in the country's development by offering more flights.

"If I can get the rights, I would love to also operate flights from Cebu and Davao," Fernandes said.

He said he was bullish on the tourism prospects of the Philippines saying that it had a lot of sites to offer.

"It is just that it can be difficult to fly in the country," Fernandes said.

With more flights, Fernandes said the Philippines would be opened up to the tourism market.

He has currently flies to Clark in Angeles City from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

"My plan is to go as far as the government will allow me to go," he said.

He said AirAsia had enlisted the support of the Malaysian government to talk with its Philippine counterpart on the possibility of getting more flights for the airline.

AirAsia was founded as a budget airline in December 2001, offering more than 100 domestic and international flights to Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Cambodia, Vietnam and the Philippines.

Getting elected now too expensive – Part 2

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Honorio C. General

EVERY DEMOCRACY REACHES a point in its history where running for an elective office has become too expensive. The United States reached that point about 40 years ago. The Philippines is at that point now.

A long, long time ago, a Filipino would run for office. If lucky to be able to hold in the prestige of being the mayor or member of a municipality, or a gobernador of a province. To be a congressman, or diputado, or to be a senador, was the pinnacle of personal glory.

Besides, campaigning then were not too expensive. Today, running for office, even in the smallest of towns, can be impossible for the candidate, win or lose. So one runs anyways for office just to amass prestige in the community.

The cost of an electoral campaign is simply far bigger than the salary and allowances of the office. As a result, the elected official gets back the investment through graft and corruption. In fact, the hardship of running a politician expects to make from all sorts of deals while in power to precisely the reason why he is in politics in the first place, even at the risk of losing an occasional investment.

Unless the candidate is wealthy, he relies heavily on contributions from supporters. In the United States, fund-raising from the public is the only source of funds for any election campaign. Hundreds of thousands of dollars are raised to entertained citizens where the President is the guest of honors. The faithful go home in the happy feeling that they have paid their dues and expect nothing back.

But the bulk of the campaign funds come from large contributors, on the one, who expect to get their investments back one way or the other. In the US, a bet can only be rewarded with a prestigious appointment, such as ambassador to the Court of St. James in London. Others are handed huge, fully government contracts.

In the US, campaign spending is highly regulated. Contributions, including TV ads, are closely monitored. And more important, the law is enforced. This is why Mark Jimenez spent a year in jail for making an illegal campaign contribution.

In Germany, political parties garnering at least 5 percent of the votes in an election are granted a subsidy in the next electoral campaign. The Germans believe that, in order to have good leaders, taxpayers should be willing to share in the campaign expenses of a party.

I am sure the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Italy, Australia and Spain have their own schemes on how to limit election spending.

Here, there are also spending limits prescribed in the election code. The campaign period is limited to three months prior to election day. The size and numbers of posters are prescribed. But there is no hourly deadline on the expenditure/campaign budget.

Depending on the office he is running for, a candidate can spend a specific number of pesos per registered voter. But this rule is largely ignored. After the elections, the candidates file their sworn statements attesting that they had stayed within the spending limits set by law. The Comelec files the affidavits away, and the candidate officially go very far away into the dirty world of graft and corruption.

Comelec seems unwilling or unable to enforce the law. Or, maybe, the existing law and the implementing rules are simply impractical and unenforceable.

I have this uneasy feeling that the elections in May will be the most expensive midterm elections in our history.

After the May elections, President Arroyo should set up a Presidential Commission to propose a new law on how to put a cap on campaign spending. This new law should be practical, allowable and in effect for the 2010 elections and onwards.

Unless we put a rein on campaign spending, let us forget about fighting graft and corruption.

JBIC loan approval seen

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE GOVERNMENT IS OPTIMISTIC the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), the Philippines' biggest source of foreign investment, will grant the P2.04-billion loan sought by the country for the power sector development program.

Finance Undersecretary Rabon Ongpin said the loan from JBIC would re-finance the P2.04-billion loan disbursed by the Japan Development Bank last December, but to support reform programs in the power sector.

The power sector development program was put up to help energy officials power supply to minimize the risk of power shortages in the future and address threats to economic growth.

Ongpin said the activities under the program include the strengthening of the operations of the Wholesale Electricity Spot Market (WESM) and the legal, fiscal and regulatory capability of the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC).

The WESM, which is expected to help bring down the cost of electricity in the Philippines by promoting competition in the electric power market, started operations in June last year.

Ongpin said the government hopes JBIC would sign the loan in February, or before the fiscal year 2006 of the Japanese government ends in March.

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Upgrading of the San Fernando Airport, Phase I

The Poro Point Management Corporation (PPMC), a subsidiary of the Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA), through the PPMC 2007 Corporate Operating Budget, intends to apply the sum of four hundred seventy two million eighty three thousand six hundred twenty two and 88/100 pesos (Php472,083,622.88) being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the Upgrading of the San Fernando Airport, Phase I. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.

PPMC now calls for the submission of Letters of Intent (LOIs) from potential bidders to apply for eligibility for the Upgrading of the San Fernando Airport, Phase I. The scope of work to be undertaken shall include but is not limited to the following. Tunnelling of all batching plant, equipment, machinery, tools, labor, materials, transportation and all other items necessary to complete the following:

(a) Construction and strengthening of airfield pavements, including rail removal;
(b) Construction of airport horizontal and vertical structures; and
(c) Electrical works.

Bidders should possess a valid PCAB licenses with Category "AAA" and with Inter-Agency Category of Large "B" for General Engineering (Road, Highway Pavement, Railways, Airport Horizontal Structures and Bridges) and PCAB license with Category "A" and with Inter-Agency Category of Medium "B" for General Building (Building and Installation Plant).

To be considered eligible and qualified, the prospective bidders, should have completed a similar contract with a value of at least fifty percent (50%) of the ABC, and meet the other eligibility requirements stated in the Eligibility Documents.

Interested Applicants may inspect the Eligibility Documents at the PPMC, Administration Building, Poro Point Special Economic and Freeport Zone, Poro, San Fernando City, La Union from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on January 30, 2007 to February 5, 2007.

Eligibility Documents shall be issued and made available to interested applicants upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of Fifty thousand pesos (Php50,000.00) to the PPMC Administration Building, Poro Point Special Economic and Freeport Zone, Poro, San Fernando City La Union from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on January 30, 2007 to February 5, 2007.

Interested Applicants shall submit their LOIs together with their accomplished Eligibility Documents to the BAC at the BCDA Corporate Center, 24th Bonifacio Technology Center, 31st St., Crescent Park West, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City on or before 9:00 a.m., February 12, 2007. Opening of eligibility documents shall be at 9:30 a.m., February 12, 2007 at the above address in the presence of the prospective Bidders' representatives who choose to attend.

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part II (IRR-A) of Republic Act (RA) No. 9184, otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act", and is restricted, unless otherwise stated, to organizations with at least seventy five percent (75%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines. Bidding shall be governed by the IRR-A of R.A. 9184, while Bids from eligible foreign contractors shall be evaluated in accordance with the IRR-A of R.A. 9184, a contract shall only be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder who was determined as such during post-qualification.

Interested Eligible Bidders may obtain further information from PPMC and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on February 15, 2007 to February 21, 2007.

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by Bidders that passed the eligibility check upon presentation of the Notice of Eligibility to the BAC Secretariat at the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of Fifty one hundred thousand pesos (Php100,000.00). The Bidding Documents shall be issued and made available at the PPMC Administration Building, Poro Point Special Economic and Freeport Zone, Poro, San Fernando City, La Union from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on February 15, 2007 to February 21, 2007. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the Bidder or his authorized representative.

PPMC shall hold a Pre-Bid Conference and open to all Eligible Bidders on February 22, 2007, 2:00 p.m. at the San Fernando Airport, Terminal Building, Carlatang, San Fernando City, La Union.

Eligible Bidders must submit their Bids to the BAC at the BCDA Corporate Center, 24th Bonifacio Technology Center, 31st St., Crescent Park West, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City on or before 9:00 a.m., March 6, 2007. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in the form and in the amount specified in the Bidding Documents. Late Bids shall not be accepted. Bid opening shall be at 9:30 a.m., March 6, 2007 at the above address in the presence of the Bidder's representatives who choose to attend.

Completion of the Works is required within four hundred five (405) calendar days from the issuance of the Notice to Proceed.

PPMC reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidders or Bidders.

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(Sgd.) ATTY. ANTHONY C. MANGUIAT
Chairman
Special Bids and Awards Committee

LIFESTYLE
Editor Cholo Banal-Ferrera

Grain matter for higher IQ

Fortifying salt with iodine can help ensure proper mental development in children and safe pregnancies among women

By Linda B. Bolido

IT MAY NOT GUARANTEE GENIUS, BUT iodized salt can at least help prevent mental retardation and raise intelligence quotient (IQ) levels.

The fortification of salt and a few other food items, like oil, is generally considered a cheap, effective, efficient and convenient way to make sure that people who are deficient in iodine get their supply of the important mineral.

Best known primarily as the cause of goiter, the unsightly growth of the thyroid gland, iodine deficiency has since been found to have a more insidious effect, particularly among women and children. Incidentally, the Philippines started observing this year (today) Iodization Week, which will be marked every year on the fourth week of January.

According to the website of the International Council for Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders (ICCIDD): "Iodine deficiency is the single most common cause of preventable mental retardation and brain damage in the world. It also decreases child survival, causes goiters, and impairs growth and development.

"Iodine deficiency in pregnant women causes miscarriages, stillbirths and other complications. Children with ID[D] can grow up cretins, apathetic, mentally retarded, and incapable of normal movements, speech, or hearing."

Deadly

The council added: "It is now known that the effects on the developing brain are much more deadly, and constitute a threat to the social and economic development of many countries."

It estimates that throughout the world, some 2.2 billion people, 38 percent of the global population, live in areas with iodine deficiency.

While seafood is good natural source of iodine, in the Philippines, an archipelago with more than 7,000 islands, deficiency exists in some parts of the country.

The Food and Nutrition Research Institute (FNRI) says, in general, iodine deficiency disorder (IDD) is mild but there are areas of moderate, where severe and moderate cases have been found in some children.

About 36 out of every 100 children (35.8 percent) have exposure to severe IDD, the scientific says.

It added: "All four provinces of Southern Mindanao (Region 10) are high-risk IDD areas... About 6 to 7 out of every 10 children are moderate to severe IDD cases."

In some areas in the country, geography means limited access to seafood, hence a significant ratio of IDD. The places are usually landlocked or mountainous, providing very few sources for natural iodine.

In coastal areas where IDD is a problem, marginalized fisherfolk often choose to sell everything they catch and subsist on cheaper but iodine-short diets.

A teaspoon in a lifetime

Like most other countries where IDD is a major concern, the Philippines has turned to the effective and affordable technology of fortifying salt with iodine. The ICCIDD says a person actually requires only a teaspoonful in a lifetime.

"But because iodine cannot be stored for long periods by the body, new amounts are needed regularly... Salt fortification and supplementation have proven highly successful and sustainable interventions. Iodized salt programs and iodized oil supplements are the most common tools in the fight against IDD."

In 1995, the Philippines passed Republic Act No. 8172, or the Asin Law, to promote salt fortification nationwide. Among other things, the law requires the addition of iodine to all salt intended for animal and human consumption.

The initiative seems to be producing the desired results. According to the FNRI: "There is a dramatic improvement in the iodine status from 1998 to 2003 based on UIE (urinary iodine excretion) levels. The proportion of 6- to 12-year-old children with IUE values below 50 µg/L (micrograms per liter) is moderate or severe is 11.4 percent less than the 35.8 percent in 1998.

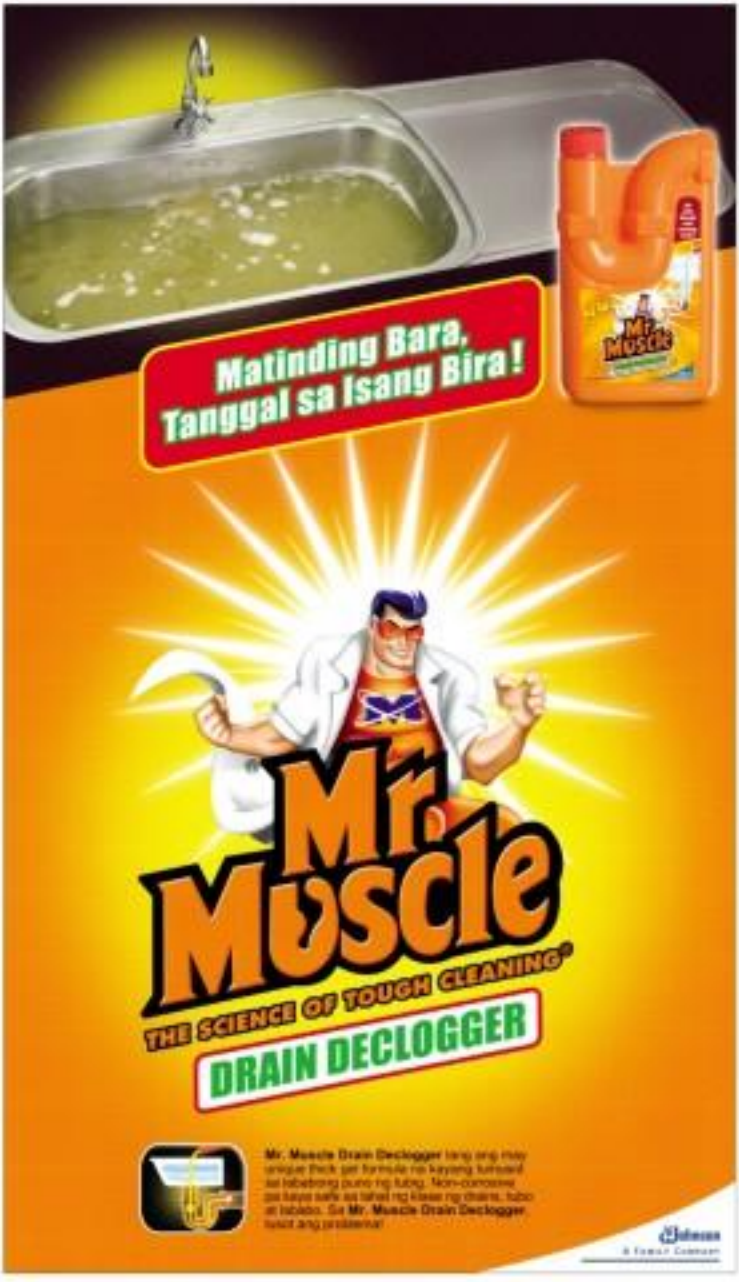
"While the information already looking behind salt to UIE is not available, it is highly probable that the dramatic increase in UIE between 1998 and 2003 is a result of the progress made towards USI (universal salt iodization)."

But the goal of giving 90 percent of households access to iodized salt has not been accomplished yet.

On Feb. 2, food experts and the ICCIDD Executive Board will have a Dialogue Meeting to discuss the IDD situation and review progress of the Salt Iodization Program (SIP).

Dr. Thor Sen Lim, Jr., ICCIDD focal point person in the Philippines, said among those invited to join the dialogue were the National Nutrition Council and allied agencies like the Department of Health, Bureau of Food and Drug and FNRI, as well as the World Health Organization, United Nations Children's Fund, salt industry, nongovernment organizations.

The meeting, Lim also said, was preparatory to the 22nd Annual Meeting on Feb. 3-4 of the ICCIDD Board at the Philippine Plaza. This is the first time the board meeting is being held here. The meeting will be followed by the 8th Congress of the Asia and Europe. The said Asian Iodine cluster on Feb. 5-6 of the same venue.



INSIDE OUT
Cory Quirino

Q & A on pain, cold and the blues

IN THE BATTLEFIELD OF HEALTH, THE weather can wreak havoc, before some want-what-not to us.

But we can win ourselves against threats to our health.

How can I ease chronic pain?

The answer is not to stop well at the first sign of a headache or body pain. This can only lead to more serious problems. As soon the acetaminophen or ibuprofen effect wears off, the pain will return. Taking it too much or a habit, it can be dangerous.

Taking more than the prescribed dosage of acetaminophen may damage your liver. If taken with an alcoholic drink, you will definitely damage your liver. Ibuprofen if taken in excess, especially if you are allergic to it, can irritate the stomach lining and cause ulcers.

Acetaminophen, salicylates (aspirin) or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs can be beneficial if you don't overdose. Better stop taking pain killers. See your doctor.

Poisons

1. Determine the source of your pain and address the real cause of the problem.

2. Try acupuncture, an ancient Chinese therapy involving the insertion of needles in key points of the body. It stimulates the release of natural pain killers or endorphins.

Acupuncture is also recommended for chronic illnesses like rheumatic disorders, asthma, hypertension, etc. Dr. Li Qiuming Zhang, a professor of acupuncture and practicing physician at the TCM (Traditional Chinese Medicine) Center, tel. 6344006, TCM has over 300 state-of-the-art herbal preparations.

3. Get a massage—acupressure, shiatsu or reflexology—to relax tense muscles to steadily and ease frayed nerves. Visit HKU Star Reflexology expert Dory Wong at Kowloon-city Centre Mongkok can also take care of other health conditions like migraine, back pain, sinus problems. Home services available. Tel. 81283999.

4. Natural remedies like hot peppers can relieve the misery caused by arthritis, diabetes and shingles. Dried cayenne peppers or capsicum can be bought at health stores. Ginger is prominent in the diet of arthritis and bronchitis. Take three times a day with no regret.

5. Know the foods that could trigger headaches—caffeine, chocolate, cheese, yoghurt, nuts, cured meats (hotdogs, salami, etc.), yeasts or monosodium glutamate (MSG), citrus fruits (orange, lemon), baked goods with yeast, aspartame (artificial sweetener).

Arthritis pain triggers include corn, wheat, pork, oranges, milk, oats, rye, eggs, beef, coffee, nuts, shrimp, grapefruit, tomatoes, peanuts, sugar, barley, lamb, lemon, soy bean.

Add more fish to your diet.

Source: Headache Q&A, The National Headache Foundation, "Inner Cleansing Diet"—ICBA Medical Publishing)

How do you 'comfort' a cold?

Everyone falls victim to a cold. Sneezes, coughs and headaches can spoil a cold on any. While there is no cure drugs to cure a cold, it usually goes in 7-10 days.

1. Take vitamin C in if you make a cold less severe. Drink citrus juices rich in vitamin C.

2. Stay cool. Stress can make you more susceptible to colds.

3. Wash your hands as often as possible.

4. Keep children's toys clean.

5. Ventilate the house.

6. Don't smoke and stay away from smokers. Tobacco smoke irritate resistance membranes.

7. Keep the air you breathe hot and moist. A vaporizer can ease breathing problems. You may also dip a handkerchief in hot water and squeeze off excess water. Place it on your nose and breathe in the warmth.

8. Drink plenty of water, 10-12 glasses daily.

9. Rest.

10. Gargle with warm water. Mix vinegar with a cup filled with warm water, a pinch of salt and baking soda in fresh cut onions.

11. Herbal remedies—echinacea/chamomile tea, freshly grated horseradish is infusion. Mix with honey to gargle for sore throat.

Can I beat the blues?

You can but not with drugs, alcohol and sugar. When you are down, do not be alone.

1. Move your body to level your mind. Exercise eases depression.

2. Embrace romantic flesh.

3. Walk in the light. A sunny day can lift your mood.

4. Be with people who make you smile and laugh. Find positive, powerful people.

5. Eat right. Complex carbohydrates help. Take vitamins if complex.

Love and light!

CAROL Cabangon Chua with Lovely R. and Jun Cabangon Chua

SERENA Rosendo Pujeat with her mother, Lovely Tecson R., lady of the hour; Lili Arroyo; the gorgeous Pedro Leon; and the host, Sec. Bert Rosendo

DASHING Ambassador Albert del Rosario with Mary Tecson

A lovely surprise for a lovely lady

WE WERE TOLD TO BE THERE promptly at 8 p.m., 30 minutes before that lovely lady of ladies arrived for her big day, palangga.

It was definitely a super memorable reunion for Lovely Tecson Rosendo, who normally spends her birthday doing charity work then celebrating quietly at home with her grandchildren.

This time, sisters Secretary Sec Rosendo and children Maria, Bertrand, Serena and Erwin had other plans, siblings. They gave her a surprise party at the dressy restaurant Le Soufflé, Rockwell Club.

Though it was short notice, all her dearest ones flew back to the present as soon as time, palangga. Her daughter Judi Arroyo was there to greet Lovely (though she had to borrow only for another appointment). Among the guests were darling ambassador Albert del Rosario, beautiful Belen Botho, resilient lady Judy Amanda Brion, adorable and vivacious Letty Bel. Virgie Barbers was emoting news of cabinet members Joel Rhodesia and Alice Reiss, hostesses Angelie Tan, daughter-in-law of Larry T. businessman Andre Revilla, cyber-saint lawyer Dante Jimpit, founder Tamaso, dear pals Alex Lina, Ching Cruz and Agnes Rodriguez, honorary consul of Seychelle of Gardoz, brilliant Secretary Arthur Yap, plus other pals of Lovely, palangga.

Highlight of the affair was a duet by Arthur Robles and Bro. Bert Rosendo, who used to be a Senate colleague of Sen. Tito Sotto. Then the authors talked about how Lovely touched their lives. Top gourmand society editor-cook Sonia Ortigas had little cakes as giveaway for those who attended the really lovely gathering of Lovely's true friends.

Cheers, palangga!

New Silliman president

When you get an invite to be a guest of honor for a two special occasion, with our hosting an outlook, you can off to Dumaguete, palangga.

Silliman University, one of the country's most prestigious universities, is about 400 miles south of Manila. It is a laid-back campus beside the sea with over 300 towering acacia trees and 100 years of history.

Founded in 1901 by the board of foreign Presbyterian Church of the United States, Silliman started out as a modest school for boys. It later became a center of quality Christian education, thanks to the generous gift of $30,000 from Dr. Horace Brinsmade Silliman.

Perched at the edge of the postcard-pretty Dumaguete, Silliman has 15 academic units and more than a hundred buildings. It has over 7,000 students from all over the country and 750 teachers, faculty and staff members.

Silliman's celebration has 200 years to forthcoming on 12th president, brilliant Dr. Ben Malayang III. The investiture was held at the Glen Jordan Hall of Law Auditorium, palangga. Malayang, a native of Cotabato City, Mindanao (or Cotabato) comes from a bundle of Illonggos on both sides of his father's and mother's sides.

"I plan to transform this campus into a highly prestigious and accredited center of excellence," said Malayang in his speech.

Yes, palangga, it was a big weekend to get away from the humiliation traffic and pollution of our town's asphalt jungle.

Scent-abilities

Chosen personas of the media and other invitees gathered in the popular Penshoppe outlet in Greenhills' I, and mingled with some celebrity expert and insiders and style aficionados, who shared their latest hints on scents and attraction, palangga. They revealed the secrets of attraction—pheromones and sure do to click with the opposite sex.

"People often think that it's the men who do the fine moves, but in reality, it's the women who do. A woman's work especially when she wears the right scent, can be an effective charming and enterprising thing," KJ Ledesma said.

The panelists gave tips on the best way to apply perfume. "What most people do is they spray the perfume right before they go out the door. The best way to do it though, to achieve that signature scent, is to spray the perfume directly on the skin," says Penshoppe's Cristina Gonzales.

Crisp and cool may be the buzzword for many's fragrances. The newest fragrance from popular French brand Axe, blends the energy of citrus and fruit notes, a hint of spice, the tingling aroma of fruits and wood, and the calming subtle of a cool water base.

Now, these people know that Axe is one of the pioneering male fragrances here in the Philippines. It traces its roots from 30 years and, for 23 years, it has produced and it continues to produce enticing scents and other grooming products for men. "Axe is the scent of attraction."

We had the chance to be swept with the seductive scent of Axe Chili, in fact, gorgeous models inside the capsule. Onstage, they showed an eye-catching scene of intimate grilling attracted to the music from the capsule. Cool, indeed.

With Axe Chili's fresh and vibrant scent, plus the sexiest tips on what chicks will the opposite sex, all you guys and gals will surely have more emotion, and confidence to go out/keep dating.

Concert

Already it's February, would you believe. One of this country's top resorts, the Pearl of the Pacific Resort and Spa, is partner with Promix Music Philippines, will bring us Salcedonians, palangga.

On Feb. 2 and 3, watch for the island first concert of the queen of house music, Abbe, and on Feb. 9 and 10, enjoy the music of Jose Mari while enjoying the breeze by the sea.

On Feb. 16 to 18, all you lovers will enjoy the concert of Boogie-oni.

Check out this fantastic opportunity to enjoy paradise with the special package the resort offers with the special support of Mom Rosanny Dee Island Spa, Island Salon, Island Weddings and Co., and Sonic Addings.

SUSAN Dringas and Anita Crespo

JUSTA Tantoco

VIRGIE Barbers

CLOSE PALS Nina Jimson Tolly Mahilang, Mari Bermejo and Del Mendoza

FUN PACK Angelo Fajo and mother-in-law Lorry Tan, and Mona Rosendo Tantoco

GLAM GALS Agnes Rodrigues, celebrator Lovely R., Daisy Reyes and Ching Cruz

UST professor Pepin Aguilar-Pineda

HIGROS Oriental Gov. George Arnaiz, Belle's rep Isidora Sarah Ojeda de Peña, resident Beverly P. Rosales and Tony Rosendo

SILLIMAN'S FIRST FAMILLE. Mitum Jay Malayang-Kintanar, Robert Jol Malayang, Dorcas Malayang and bride Gladys Rio, and Aurea's Mayna Malayang

CHED Commissioner Dr. Rosa Sabina Bruskas Bruskas at the 12th Silliman University president, Dr. Ben S. Malayang III

MALAYANG with Dr. Vicente Alcala, Senior Research Advisor, Dr. Agnesio Pelaez, Dr. Rosy Joy Tan, Prof. Lumen Magtalas-Briones, lawyer Frans Sapsin, Dr. Angel Alcala and Dr. Quintin Doromal

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH
Maurice Arcache
Photos by Alex Vian
Hagen's wig
Kailah Grey Shaw

SINGING sisters Evelyn Alcazaren and judge Jessie Lind Alcazaren-Dalusung

DR. JASPER Hospitalsirathong, Dr. Kenneth Dickson and Dr. Agnesio Pelaez

UNIQUEVER brand manager Percy Dechenbi, and Centro MacLang's Brad Gabriel and Abner Marking

VANESSA Pascua, RJ Ledesma, Francis Flores and Mario Lucero

COMMODITIONS: Ivana Evangelista, Megan Vitaly Sarmiento, Flores and Mario Weddings' Rosario Mrs. Gonzales

HOST Ms. Tricore

FRANCISCO Ignacio Gabriel Alkuello

INNER AWARENESS
Arlene Licsico

Biblical natural cures

AT NINE THE LATE RS JASON WESTERS who first told me of passages in the Christian Bible that talked about healing using natural substances.

So cured himself of terminal throat and mouth cancer by researching herbs mentioned in the Bible. He said the Bible contained advice to eat certain fruits and their seeds to treat various illnesses.

One of his eloquent efforts to find a cure for his dreaded disease, he traveled to different countries and talked to rabbis and priests of different religions to identify the fruits and herbs mentioned in the Bible. No one could tell him.

But, by combining several natural plants with biblical references, he developed a tea that cured him of cancer. I wrote said it was a miracle. That tea is now sold all over the world as Rs Jason Western Tea.

God's plan?

Could it be that it is God's plan that for every disease that afflicts humans, there is something to cure that will cure it?

But why should God allow a disease to emerge if there was no hope of curing it? It just doesn't make sense.

So were the so-called incurable modern illnesses—cancer, acquired immune deficiency syndrome (Aids), Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's, arthritis or Ankylosing Spondylitis—must have a natural remedy. However, people have not yet discovered it.

Recently, I was taught by a Catholic edition of the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible and I came across a book in the Old Testament not found in other editions of the Bible. This is the book of Tobit, which is placed between the books of Nehemiah and Judith.

According to the introduction or summary about this portion of the Old Testament, the book of Tobit is "about a righteous Jew [named] Tobit, who is in exile in Nineveh, and Sarah, who is rescued by a demon in Media. God sends the Angel Raphael to help both Tobit and Sarah. Tobit's son, Tobias, goes with Raphael to Media, finds the demon, and marries Sarah."

Cataract treatment

But what struck me in the Book of Tobit, which was not mentioned in the above summary, were certain passages in which the Angel Raphael gave Tobias specific instructions for curing cataract and for curing our demons using some internal organs of a big fish that tried to swallow Tobias in the Tigris River.

Chapter 6, verses 1-9, of Tobit describes the healing process in detail.

"The young man went out and the angel went with him. So they both journeyed along, and when the first night overtook them they camped by the Tigris River. Then the young man went down to wash his feet in the Tigris River.

"Suddenly a large fish leaped up from the water and tried to swallow the young man's foot, and he cried out, but the angel said to the young man, 'Catch hold of the fish and hang on to it!' So the young man grasped the fish and drew it up on the land.

"Then the angel said to him, 'Cut open the fish and take out its gall, heart and liver. Keep them with you, but throw away the intestines. For its gall, heart and liver are useful as medicine.' So after having open the fish the young man gathered together the gall, heart and liver; then he roasted and ate some of the fish, and kept some to be salted.

"The two continued on their way together until they were near Media. Then the young man questioned the angel and said to him, 'Brother Azariah, what medicine can the angel gave us here? what medicinal value is there in the fish's heart, and liver, and in the gall?'

"He replied, 'In for the fish's heart and liver, you must burn them to make a smoke in the presence of a man or woman afflicted by an demon or evil spirit, and every affliction will flee away and never remain with that person ever longer. And as for the gall, anoint a person's eyes where white films have appeared on them; blow upon them, upon the white films, and the eyes will be healed.'"

From the above passage, we may gather that not only demonic possession, but also diseases or afflictions caused by cataracts, can be cured by burning the fish's heart and liver.

Unfortunately, the book of Tobit did not identify the fish that Tobias was instructed to catch but only that it was a big one.

Even the so-called incurable modern illnesses like cancer and Aids may have a natural remedy that people have not yet discovered.

Note: for inquiries on books, paranormal services and seminars on Inner Mind Development, ESP and Intuition Development, and Awareness, Karma & Reincarnation conducted by this writer, please call 8 927 2395, 8926606, or fax 6750890. Email: innerawareness_2002@yahoo.com

Para sa walang ka-date.

P160

Sa Super Combo Meals ng Super Bowl, 'di ka mag-iisa.

Scientific sports and fitness courses

THE SCIENTIFIC SPORTS AND FITNESS Council of the Philippines (SSFC) will be conducting officials certification and scientific training programs in various sports and fitness disciplines this year.

SSFC is composed of elite and nationally accredited sports and fitness associates, together with the National Athletic Training and Fitness Academy (NaTFa).

It will be offering certification and training courses in coaching, strength and conditioning, athletic training, personal training, functional training, athletic taping, physiotherapy, speed and agility sports rehab, sports nutrition, sports psychology, and many more.

The activity is in response to the lack of a modern, academic and scientific training institution for sports and fitness practitioners in the country.

Heading the list of SSFC instructors are founding members Jose Ambo Cuevas, MS Athletic Training, Brigham Young University; Luigi Bercades, MS Exercise Physiology, University of Oregon; Tina Amin, RCB exercise leader; Sebastian Rizzo, BS Sports Science, University of Sydney; and Gene Bercades, MS Sports Medicine, University of Oregon.

The SSFC certification courses were designed specifically for those interested in pursuing a professional career in the field of sports and fitness. They will provide participants proper scientific background and training skills needed to succeed in their chosen fields.

Courses have prerequisite levels to cater to professionals of different skills and abilities.

The program will start Feb. 3 with the First day (Saturday, Emedar) Fitness Training Certification Course (Level 1). The program is ideal for noncertified fitness instructors and individuals who are currently practicing or are interested to be in the business.

Call 9206743.

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God's way of drawing us closer

By Halo T. Ortiz
Contributor

DOWN SYNDROME MAY a scene taken to one back in 1987.

Though some people think having a child with Down Syndrome (DS) brings good luck in the Philippines, you rarely see these kids in public places.

You do not see them on television, and, when you bring them to the mall or in churches, people often stare at them. They're because they are different. They are not like us.

But I praise God that Philippines society is changing its attitude toward DS, thanks in large measure to the efforts of the Down Syndrome Association of the Philippines (DSAP).

From a few concerned parents in 1991, the association has grown to many parents found the courage to admit that have a special child.

Why me!

Coping with marital problems, I temporarily lived in Saudi Arabia while I was pregnant. Four months later, Clarissa was born with Down Syndrome. She was dead...looks physically. Small, cropped and bipolar (a mood disorder). She had a round face, shinky eyes, small ears, deformed ears, low muscle tone and a thyroid problem.

I was devastated and became even more depressed. I could not understand what I did wrong. I asked God, "Why me?"

I could not get over the pain. I was still blaming from my unpregnant. I searched for God, cried and prayed to Him even as I sought professional help from counselors. Still I could not seem to find the answer to my problems.

The following days, as I ha to quit, I accidentally overheard a doctor talking to a couple across from my room. He said he was very discreet from God's.

I realized it was no accident I heard this news. God let me hear it so I would be thankful that our child was very much alive and healthy.

I was reminded by the passage in the Bible, Jeremiah 29:11-14, when the Lord said, "For I know the plans I have for you... plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me and when you seek me with all your heart, I will be found by you."

I realized that Clarissa was not accidentally born with Down Syndrome. The Lord purposely gave her to us because it was His way of drawing us closer to Him.

An instrument

Clarissa is an instrument, an angel sent by God. Through her, we learned to being molded and we are becoming better people. I understand the true meaning of unconditional love, perseverance and patience. Clarissa is a blessing from God. Through her, we can devote closer to the Lord.

Many God bless my husband about Clarissa's condition, we realized not to contribute to cause as possible. He reconciled and, by God's grace, we became parents.

Clarissa has been a blessing to us, not only because she unites the family, but also because our faith in God has deepened. Despite her condition, we have not lost hope and we believe that one day she will be able to speak.

She is now almost 20 years old and the speech therapist has given up on her. A similar story to the bible tells us that when Jesus was asked who sinned, the blind man or his parents. He replied "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in his life" (John 9:2-3).

ALOHA: Clarissa with some Hula artist Hawaiian-themed 18th birthday party

Last year, Clarissa spoke on two occasions. She said "Papa!" Truly, God is faithful to His words. Nothing, but nothing is impossible.

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

Triceps and torso stretch

THIS MULTIPURPOSE EXERCISE stretches the triceps (back of the arms) as well as the muscles on the sides of the torso.

Equipment
None

Exercise technique

1. Raise both arms above your head. Reach for the middle of your back with your right hand. Keep your right elbow pointing to the ceiling and use your left hand to pull your elbow gently toward the center of your head. You should feel a stretch in the back of your arm.

2. Maintaining the position of your arms and shoulders, gently bend toward the left side until you feel a stretch in the side of your body.

3. Hold the stretch for 1 to 6 count length of time.

4. Repeat on the other side.

Performance tips

1. If you have lower back problems, ask your doctor's advice before doing this stretch.

2. Keep your knees slightly bent and your abdominal muscles tight to avoid overarching your lower back while you are doing the stretch.

3. Only bend far enough to feel a gentle stretch at the side of your body.

4. Stop breathing as you hold the stretch.

Repetitions
Held for 10-30 seconds.

WELL AND GOOD
THE AGES

Your office as gym

YOU MAY NOT REALIZE IT BUT YOUR office is secretly a fitness center. You read it right. Even if your company doesn't have a gym in the premises, you can get in shape while you work.

With the right knowledge and planning, you can do a completely fitness program without compromising your work. In fact, you will become more productive, alert and energetic.

A balanced fitness program has three components—aerobic exercise (to the heart and lungs), strength training (for muscles) and stretching (for joints).

The smart is doing all three types of exercise at work without losing your job is to be chosen to those healthy routines of how to do them.

Research has proven that accumulating snippets of exercise through the day is as effective as two general fitness and weight loss as doing continuous exercise.

Plan

The your office workout is for success, you need good organizational skills, an attitude that tells people already have. How else can they be effective at work? To use those skills to make yourself healthier, slimmer, stronger and shapelier.

Power your self by doing short exercise sessions sporadically throughout the day, you need to stay active and fit, and a way to keep track of what you have to do.

Devise your own reminder system—cell phone or computer alarms, pencil notes, etc. To document and track your progress, use a PDA (personal digital assistant), email home, or go low-tech with a small notebook.

Jot down your exercises and check them off as you do them. After a few days, you will see what exercises you still have to do for that day or how many more short sessions of walking you need.

Aerobic exercise

Your goal is to accumulate 30-60 minutes a day by walking or stair-climbing. Slow walking is like strolling in the mall. A brisk pace 2.5 miles per minute. Brisk walking is walking as if you are late for an important meeting. It uses up about 5-6 calories per minute.

Take the stairs instead of the elevator or the escalator. Ask yourself: "When was the last time I used the stairs when I was only going down the first to the second floor?" Also climbing burns eight calories minutes.

Use your non-two legs to deliver messages from one department to your office to another so the office memory gets does not get all the health benefits of walking around.

If you drive to work, park your car farther away than you usually do. When doing errands after work, park at the end opposite your destination. Walk briskly without stopping to look at the store windows until you have accumulated the desired minutes, then slow down and do your window-shopping.

When going to lunch, try to find a restaurant that is within walking distance. Take the longest route you can think of to get there and back.

A pedometer, a device that counts your steps, is very useful if you don't trust the kinds of tracking the time you walk or stair-climbing. Aim for 10,000-15,000 steps a day. Pedometers can be bought at some drugstores and sporting goods stores.

Strength training

Small equipment like dumbbells, ankle weights, and exercise rubber bands can be easily kept under your desk and are very effective in firming up your muscles for a shapelier you. Try to do one or two exercises per hour. This doesn't take a lot of time. There won't even be a hint of perspiration so your boss when you finish or don't worry about being hot and sweaty.

For exercise ideas, go to www.nsa.com/publications and look under "exercises." Do a balanced upper-body, three-to-one exercise per body part. You can choose more for your problem areas. The only exercises you cannot do in the office are for the abdominals and lower back because you need to lie down on a mat to do them. Exercise do three times a day at home before or after work.

Stretching

Stretching keeps you supple and flexible and helps you avoid aches and pains associated with long hours of working at the computer. To keep things simple, do a stretch right after you do your hourly strength training exercises. If you did a three-minute strength routine, do a three-minute stretch.

Group exercise

It is more motivating to exercise with other people. Start your own "group" by getting one or two office mates or commute to doing brisk exercises at the same time in your desks. You don't have to do the exact same exercises if you have different goals (you want flatter tums, she wants shapelier thighs), but it's more fun if you have company. If you use this, you won't feel so "silly" working out by yourself.

Note: The Scientific Sports and Fitness Center, together with the National Athletic Training and Fitness Academy, will hold a Personal Training Certification Course (level 1) starting Feb. 3. Call (632) 9-or-5584-5555.

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What is Hypertension?

Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against blood vessel walls. Blood pressure rises when the arteries become narrowed, which carry the blood throughout the body. High blood pressure, also called hypertension, is dangerous because it makes the heart work harder to pump blood to the body and it contributes to hardening of the arteries or atherosclerosis, a damage to blood vessels, and can eventually lead to several other conditions, including stroke, heart failure, heart attack, kidney failure and vision problems. The major causes of hypertension are not known. However, factors and conditions may play a role in its development, including smoking, obesity, lack of physical activity, too much salt in the diet, too much alcohol consumption (not more than 2 to 3 drinks per day), stress, older age and genetics. There are usually no symptoms or signs of hypertension. In fact, nearly one-third of those who have it don't know it. This only means that you have hypertension definitely is to have your blood pressure checked at least once a year. Optimal blood pressure is less than 120/80. People whose blood pressure is above the normal range should consult their doctors about proper treatment. If your blood pressure is extremely high, there may be certain symptoms to look out for, including severe headache, fatigue or confusion, vision problems, chest pain, difficulty breathing, irregular heartbeat and blood in the urine.

More healthful salt now available

FILIPINOS HEALTH BUFFS IN OUTING could talk to us and salt can get even more healthful alternatives to French.

Sea is in uniqueness and polemicism. The salt value it has become popular in Europe, including the United Kingdom, and has and the Pacific, including Singapore, Malaysia, Japan and Australia, is now available locally.

The mineral salt that is imported from Finland is rich in sodium chloride by 30 percent and has 84 other minerals and trace elements. It is also low in sodium and is the saltiest and has no bitter aftertaste.

Russell's patented formula has gone on it the same flavor as common salt, minus the mineral sodium chloride. Sodium-support it improves the flavor, sauce effects of drugs used in the treatment of high blood pressure, and may not have the harmful effects characteristic of common salt.

Medical research has indicated that too much salt in a person's diet increases the risk of developing high blood pressure and can lead to complications like strokes, heart attacks, kidney damage, and possibly asthma and bone osteoporosis.

The problem may be caused by high levels of sodium chloride in ordinary salt.

Ancord International Inc., importers of Russell, shares the following recipe with us. Russell Finnish Sea Salt is available at Mabuhay Supermarket, Supreme Center, Sta. Lucia East Supermarket, Tropical Hut, Unimart, Quezon Provincial Hardware, Congress Supermarket, Shoemart, Landmark, Rustan's Supermarket, Rustan's Makati, Rustan's Cebu, Rustan's Davao, Rustan's Makati, Rustan's Cebu, Rustan's Davao, Rustan's Makati, Rustan's Cebu, Rustan's Davao

ENTERTAINMENT

Lea is 'Cinderella' on Asian tour '08

By Dayani San Diego Jr.

FILIPINO SINGER-ACTRESS LEA Salonga will play "Cinderella" on the Asian tour of the Rodgers & Hammerstein musical of the same name.

The tour was reported in playbill.com and broadwayworld.com and was confirmed by Lea.

The tour, which takes the Tony-winning star to mainland China, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand, premieres in Manila between June and August next year.

Lea will play the "Cinderella" role she's been linked to somewhere in Pacific in "Les Misérables," which starts rehearsals 6.

The "Cinderella" musical is based on a TV special that starred Julie Andrews in the title role. Aired by CBS in 1957, the special is considered "the most widely watched program in the medium's history" having attracted 107 million viewers.

Subsequent versions, also on TV, featured Lesley Ann Warren (1965) and Brandy (1997) as the visionary sweeper-turned-princess.

The significance of portraying a role originated by her idol Julie Andrews is not lost on the Filipina.

Lea worked with Jessie Julie in a 1992 recording of another Rodgers & Hammerstein musical "The King and I" (Julie was Anna; Lea, Tuptim; and Jim Kingsley, the King.)

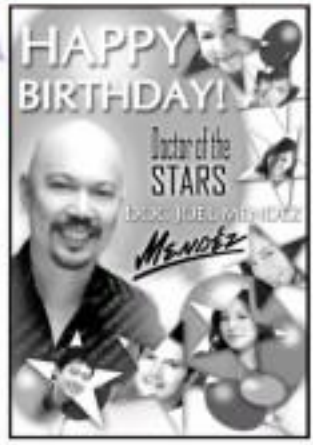
"Cinderella is my one of (Julie's) iconic roles like 'The Sound of Music,' but it will be interesting. I know I'll have a good time," Lea tells Inquirer Entertainment. "The woman I am familiar with is the one with Mitoji and Obligitto-Intertican accent. Dado Monsalve (Peque

LEA/A18

Guess who's being quoted...

...by US fan mag In Touch? Insatiate Aiza tsunami, that's what! In its January issue, the magazine published a story on reigning Molly princess Angelica Jolie and Brad Pitt. The story (see photo) yielded up a portion of Ruben Nepales' column published on Dec. 22 and 24 relieving us the couple's plans for raising a line. dy of three ones. In Touch wants to find have

CHEER FACTOR



Twists and tales at 'Bubble Gang' resto

I HAD a blast with Ogie Alcasid at his Bubble Gang hangout, located in the second floor of the YBC Bldg. in Kamputsan, across Annex. He and his "Bubble Gang" co-stars and their cool PR, Allan Dino, have added a resto to the hotts.

"We are here on entry by day and a bar by night," says Ogie, "Wednesday is Celebrity Night and we have guest DJs. We want celebrity friends to have a place to chill, no paparazzi and all. We will also throw birthday parties for celebrities, with operation from 9 to 11 p.m. It's open to the public, too, so FOR everyone."

That night I spotted Diabetes Janine, Mark Herras, Bailey May Quintos, Jimmy Gil, Bing Loyzaga, Regine Velasquez, Joshua Magbanua, Epi and Boy Liboron, John Estrada, Emmanuel Gutierrez, Sheila Montenegro, Ate Divia, Michelle Madrigal, Andrew Wahl and Will Devaughn.

Bubble's pretty hot and so are the chicks that's downstairs! after her breaking with Marvin Agustin. To lighten the mood, I stayed for to ask advice from Aiza because she knows Marvin inside out. Johnie chuckled. "Di naman naging issue si Marvin."

Bubble admits that she and Marvin still love each other. But sometimes one kind of love gives way to another. Bubble had to give in to her parents

DOLLY WOOD
Daily Anne Carnegie!

their long standing gayhoosan of JC de Vera and Jessa.

Bulls Blue would rather spare us the gory details of her "fling" with Song Sandhu, although she was educated when her name was dragged into the Local Gay to drag controversy. All in all, it was one fantastic night. Ogie's gang really knows how to keep a party bubbling with fun.

FYI. (For Your Indulgence)

• I texted Marvin Agustin that he had for him and Diabetes. It's an awful timing for a breakup...his birthday is coming up. He texted back: "No plans for my birthday dear so long I been taping for Stairway. Siguro I'll just be with Marvin in Baguio signing for "Asian Treasures."

Maybe not quickly signing her friendship Mary B's calendar that no special event in Ogie's life would ever be complete without one Regine around. Boy 2 keys pouring their hearts out in "Pasensya" for anyone who passed his way Stella, Ogie and John played poker. Mark, Diabetes and I had a few tequila shots. "To the seconds that never end," I told Diabetes.

Epi edited Boy 2 for torturing his hairstyle. It was cool to see Jojit's and Bing pouring like long lost friends instead of estranged lovers. Michelle and Heather ignored each other. Apparently,

TWISTS/D2

ARANETA CENTER
Gateway MALL Farmers Plaza
Timezone CINEMA 10
NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM | BABEL | LITTLE CHILDREN
AGENT 8-44 | SAW 3 | DEJAVU
ERAGON | THE BLOOD DIAMOND | NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
MALL 5
AGENT X-44 | NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM | DEJAVU
ROB-B-HOOD | LITTLE CHILDREN
ARANETA COLISEUM
PBA SEMIS
LOVING ARA
February 3, Saturday 8 pm

Little Crystal lives her fondest dream

By Nini Valera

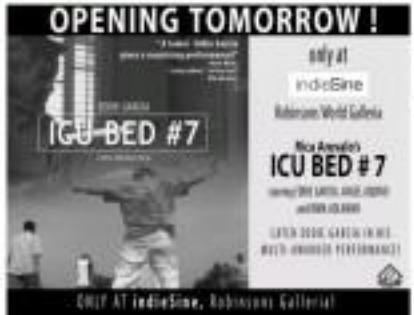
SHE WANTS TO BE a doctor someday, but for now, Crystal Reyes is living her early dream of becoming a child actress.

The 10-year-old fourth grader at the Grace Christian Academy in Silang

has been seen in a local ads as GMA TV "Wheels Charming," a musicbox about two girls' search for love and belonging.

Playing Charming to Orlando's Princess is another child actress, Rainee Lagasad.

LITTLE/A18



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GALLERIA

1 DEJA VU – THX
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 indieSinema Digital Cinema Blogging Aguila Film Festival
4 BABEL
5 LITTLE CHILDREN
6 SAW 3
7 ERAGON
8 BLOOD DIAMOND
9 ROB-B-HOOD
10 AGENT 444

ERMITA

1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 ROB-B-HOOD
SAW 3
3 BABEL
4 DEJA VU
5 LITTLE CHILDREN
6 AGENT 444
7 BLOOD DIAMOND
ERAGON

METRO EAST

1 ROB-B-HOOD
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 AGENT 444
4 DEJA VU
5 SAW 3
6 LITTLE CHILDREN
7 ERAGON
8 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

NOVALICHES

1 DEJA VU
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 AGENT 444
4 SAW 3

PIONEER

1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 BABEL
3 AGENT 444
4 LITTLE CHILDREN

STA. ROSA

1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 SPIRIT TRAP
3 SAW 3
4 KAMASUTRA 3
5 AGENT 444

LIPA

1 ZU WARRIORS
2 AGENT 444
3 A GOOD YEAR
4 SPIRIT TRAP
5 SAW 3

DASMARIÑAS

1 AGENT 444
2 KAMASUTRA 3
3 SAW 3
4 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

ANGELES

1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 AGENT 444
3 KAMASUTRA 3
4 A GOOD YEAR

IMUS

1 DEJA VU
2 SAW 3
3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
4 AGENT 444

STARMILLS

1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 KAMASUTRA 3
3 AGENT 444
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
5 SAW 3
6 A GOOD YEAR

BACOLOD

1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2
3 AGENT 444
4 DEJA VU
5 BORAT
6 SAW 3

ILOILO

1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 AGENT 444
3 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2
4 DEJA VU
5 BORAT
6 SAW 3

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D3

Lea...

From page D1

(Saturday).

The "Cinderella" Asian tour is being executed by Broadway Asia Entertainment which, according to its web site, is the exclusive theatrical representative for the Stuttgart & Hannover's Theater Li-bricy in China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan and the Philippines.

Lea says her good friend, Bobby Garcia, is directing "Cinderella." Rehearsals start in Manila in mid-2008.

Little ...

From page D1

"Hunter is my idol," Crystal tells Inquirer Entertainment. "She can cry easily."

The girls, now good friends, first met on the set of "Hunchback."

Crystal recalls, "At first, we were both shy. Then one time Hunter brought a Barbie doll and asked me to play with her."

Like most little girls, Crystal is hooked on Barbie. "I have lots of them." But unlike most girls, "I buy them with my own money."

She remembers, "Before, when we were in the mall and I wanted to buy a toy my mother would say no had no money. It's different now."

But most of her treasures, she says, are kept in the bank, since she wants to buy a car and save for the future.

Despite the price tags, Crystal says she does not feel like a star. "My classmates treat me like an ordinary student," she says. "They usually ask me to bring them to my signings. I think they're proud of me."

How does an "ordinary girl" maintain composure in her studies? "I just imagine that all the bad things happening to me are happening to someone else," she says. "Then the scene's over easy."

Twists & tales ...

From page D1

now being played on to the doctors...Nil Out of Line."

Lea inspired

Before Lea Salonga leaves for her much-awaited "Broadway comeback in "Ayo Mismidao" next month, the country's pride pays tribute to her local hit-tunes with a collection of timeless songs, "Inspired!" under Sony BMG. It's a product of her collaboration with her brother, Maestro Gerard Salonga, and her first studio album in seven years.

Among the 12 tracks are Lea's personal hits written like "Promise Me," "Land of the Living" and her wedding song, "I've Dreamed." She couldn't have chosen a better title for the album. It has done her as a mother and world-class artist.

"I learn blocks in sleep. Funny everywhere. I'm not carrying but, I feel myself changing," Lea reveals. "It's become automatic. After giving birth, singing was such an ordeal. My body had to recover and adjust."

The high-flier reveals: "I could give her a high-er than the highest notes in her vocal range. "Breastfeeding is heaven! It's nature's way of helping moms get back into shape after giving

Twists and tales at 'Bubble Gang' resto

From page D1

birth. That's how I lost weight. And it's incredible bonding time for Mo and me. When she starts going to school, I have to stay put in one place. I'd like her to study in Manila. I don't want her to grow up hating me for being away because of my work. I want to be around for all the milestones in her life. I'm willing to sacrifice career opportunities for her sake."

Lea doesn't want to dictate Nicole's dreams for her. "I want her to decide what she wants to do with her life. I won't pressure her to be somebody she's not. I don't want her to be a woman in 10. I want her to grow up at her own pace."

Gin hardly believe that our little "Sarah" has her own little one. Lea's now living the wonderful "forever" she used to sing about. Her worldwide success continues to inspire us to have better a tomorrow, too.

OPM's Gold Pixel

Vhong Navarro academy" Grand

PHILIPPINE LUNA

Star Dreamer Ring Construction is all on to prepare her month as Dream Big Production and Star Records release her debut album, "Gintong." It consists of 10 tracks (seven are her own compositions). Included are "Bring Dyi si Ding," "Sweek Ko-nary" and "Nan ng Pangarap."

"Gintong" gives a glimpse of the bright future that awaits her. HIT Ding!

M-Gage launch

Miss Rowena runs Boy group M-Gage will have its grand launch tomorrow, 9 p.m. at Metrobar West ave. The gorgeous band members are Raj Sheldon Cruz Aluminum, Joe Arman, Orlando Sol and Hannah Bruno.

Among the featured guests are Aj. Ann Marinas, Ronnie Ricketts, Vic Sotto and Val Sotto. The show is directed by Marjo L. de los Reyes-en Jose.

Call 3720000 or 09184274947 and catch M-Gage's engaging tracks!

E-mail mgagephilsolutions@yahoo.com

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Monday's Puzzle Solved

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CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku — by Danc Circo

3				8	7		2	9
7		8						
				6			5	
1			7		5			
5		7				6		4
			2		6			8
	5			9				
						2		1
9	3		8	7				5

Difficulty Level ★★

Conceptis Puzzles, Dept. 10, P.O. Box 1748, Fredericton, NB, Canada E3B 5G4

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

Tips and programs at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

4	7	4	8	1	2	3	5	9
5	3	1	7	9	4	8	2	6
8	2	9	5	6	3	1	7	4
1	5	8	6	3	7	4	9	2
2	6	7	9	4	8	5	3	1
9	4	3	2	5	1	6	8	7
6	8	5	1	7	9	2	6	3
7	1	2	3	8	6	9	4	5
3	9	6	4	2	5	7	1	8

Golden Globes come into their own

More employment opportunities in today's JOB Inquirer

FOR DECADES NOW, THE GOLDEN Globe awards have been synonymous to cinematic excellence. Because, striving as they proclaim to the much more popular Academy Awards.

Slowly but surely is the now-millennium, however, the film section of the Golden Globes has increased in importance and significance. In fact, from the general industry reaction to the recent 2006 Golden Globe awards, we can say that the traditionally "lesser" awards have finally come into their own.

We think this is a good development because, for all of their pageantry the Oscars are sometimes not all that credible, with Academy juries voting subjectively on occasion.

It's true that, being industry awards, the Oscars carry more weight and clout, because the artists like being cited by their peers, who are supposed to be acutely knowledgeable about what only insiders overflower in the intellectual movie arts and crafts.

On the other hand, the occasional factor sometimes plays too big a part in the deliberations, and that makes the Oscars as objective as they should be.

A prime example of this is the year in which Elizabeth Taylor came up with "somebody" performances in "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" and "Suddenly Last Summer," but lost out in the 1958 and 1959 awards.

Then, she felt grievously ill, and the Academy politely gave her a "sympathy" Oscar for her rather mediocre portrayal in "Butterfield 8."

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

But these past, the Golden Globes are handed out by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, so they may be deemed to be "outsider" awards, vis-a-vis the "insider" Oscars.

Through the years, however, the Globes have acquired a reputation for keeping an eye out for small gems that "mainstream"-oriented Hollywood-based film practitioners sometimes overlook. The Globes have also tended to be more "international" in outlook.

Instinctively, the Academy Awards have been changing in outlook and orientation this past decade—in favor of those less routine of the Golden Globes. Oscars are now awarded to smaller films, and to works and performances from different countries.

In fact, many people now look to the Globes for early signs of how the Oscars could turn out. So topical have the Globes become that the Oscars' awards rites have been scheduled earlier in the year, so as not to feel too anticlimactic when compared to the Golden Globes.

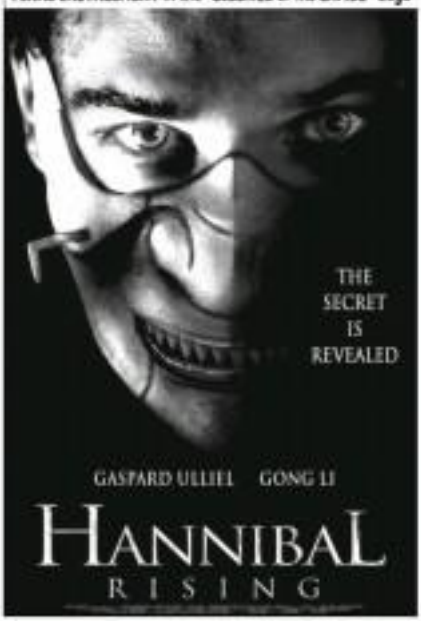
'The Promise'

THE ORIGINAL soundtrack album of the new film, "The Promise," is now available in record outlets, while the CMA films and Regal Films production will be shown starting Feb. 14. Valentine's Day. "The album features "Promise (I'll Never Say Goodbye)," the movie's theme song, sung as a love duet by Regina Belmonte and Gino Al-

mondi. The recording has been getting exclusive airplay on radio stations like 90.7 Love Radio, Energy FM 91.5, 1498 93.9, Home Radio 97.5, YES 106 101.1, MOR 101.9 Kr-Ish and Hot FM 102.7.

NEXT ATTRACTION

From Bestselling Author THOMAS HARRIS comes the FINAL INSTALLMENT in the "SILENCE OF THE LAMBS" Saga



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Choose Your Valentine Show

IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR. And so, once again, we are helping you pick the best show for that special date, by asking the concert artists who are going onstage what they have in store for audiences.

Kuh Ledesma

"Love is . . ." watch guests Bob Aves-ney and Ray Valera, Feb. 13-14, Capitol's Bar, Mandarin Oriental Hotel

When you're not doing a concert, how do you celebrate Valentine's Day?

I am blessed to always have dinners on Valentine's Day.

What's the most romantic Valentine's Day you've ever experienced?

I don't think I've ever had one with a date, but I have experienced romantic Valentines in some of the shows I've done ...because of the songs.

ERIK Santos and Kuh Ledesma

What's an ideal Valentine date?

Someone who is a lot of fun and funny but super good-looking and smart at the same time. Someone who loves life and music.

What's your last text done?

Robert De Niro because he is someone I admire. He's totally my type!

What's the most romantic love song?

"What Are You Doing the Rest of Your Life?" films, "Three Thin Moments," a commitment song popular in weddings. In fact, I have sung it in two weddings.

If you were not doing a show, who would you watch?

I would love to watch a food concert.

Why should we watch your show?

The songs are very well-chosen, my repertoire is very extensive. My guests are wonderful singers. The duets are fabulous. My guests are amazing. The venue is very intimate and cozy and, as bonus, the tickets are affordable. Request line (Negra Arroyo).

Golden Sunset

Two hours from Manila, in Calatagan, Batangas, is the Golden Sunset Resort, fast becoming known for weekend cultural shows.

Tanjakilcoan Cove, the resort's officials' (here) troupe, presents the resort's rich heritage through colorful song and dance numbers. Plus, a highlight of the show, the Kinnaklan-Polynesian Fire Dance.

"The performances are dedicated to model-dancer," says Ricky Reyes, resort proprietor.

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Manila, Philippines, 26 January 2007

Visa and Tiger Airways, Singapore's low fare airline, jointly launched great travel offers for Visa cardholders to enjoy low fare travel in 2007.

Tiger Airways is offering 20% discounts on fares for bookings from 26 January to 4 February 2007 for travel to and from Singapore in March 2007. This means Visa card holders will enjoy twice the discount on bookings with 40% off Tiger Airways fares.

Receive an double discount offers in choice Manila (Clark) to Singapore and other destinations:

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- Singapore - Darwin
- Singapore - Hat Yai
- Singapore - Hanoi
- Singapore - Ho Chi Minh City
- Singapore - Phuket
- Singapore - Krabi
- Singapore - Udon Thani

"Visa is proud to partner with Tiger Airways on this promotion. The exclusive discount gives added value for Visa cardholders," said Visa International Country Manager for the Philippines Bob Joubert. "It has always been Visa's goal to make the payment process as rewarding, secure and convenient as possible. With this promotion we hope that we can make travel to Singapore and other destinations even easier and more affordable for Visa cardholders."

"We want to make Tiger Airways synonymous with great value and we are excited at being able to offer these great discounts so that our customers can enjoy our fantastic low fares. This is the start of a brand new year and we are delighted to bring even more value to our partners at Visa. For this week, Visa cardholders will enjoy an exclusive double discount on their bookings for travel in March 2007," said Tiger Airways Chief Marketing and Commercial Officer Rosalind Tey.

"Today's travelers are always on the lookout for good reliable, affordable air services. We are proud to have been the choice of more than two million passengers in just two short years of operations. This shows our strategy of offering convenient, sustainable low cost fares for travel across the Asia Pacific region is well received by the travel market. We invite all Visa cardholders to visit our website www.tigerairways.com and make a booking to enjoy the exclusive offers now!"

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